

CLOSE UP

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Contents

	PAGE
On the Sets of the Film <i>Atlantis</i> . Ernö Metzner	153
The Experiment of Chesterfield. Robert Herring	161
The Music for Harlequin. Eric Walter White	164
Vertov ad Absurdam. J. Pennethorne Hughes	174
Pabst-Dovjenko, a comparison. John C. Moore	176
German Film Season, 1932-3. A. Kraszna-Krausz	184
The International Exhibition of Photography in Brussels. Trude Weiss	188
Notes on some Films. Bryher	196
Kitsch. Dr. Hanns Sachs	200
Comment and Review	205

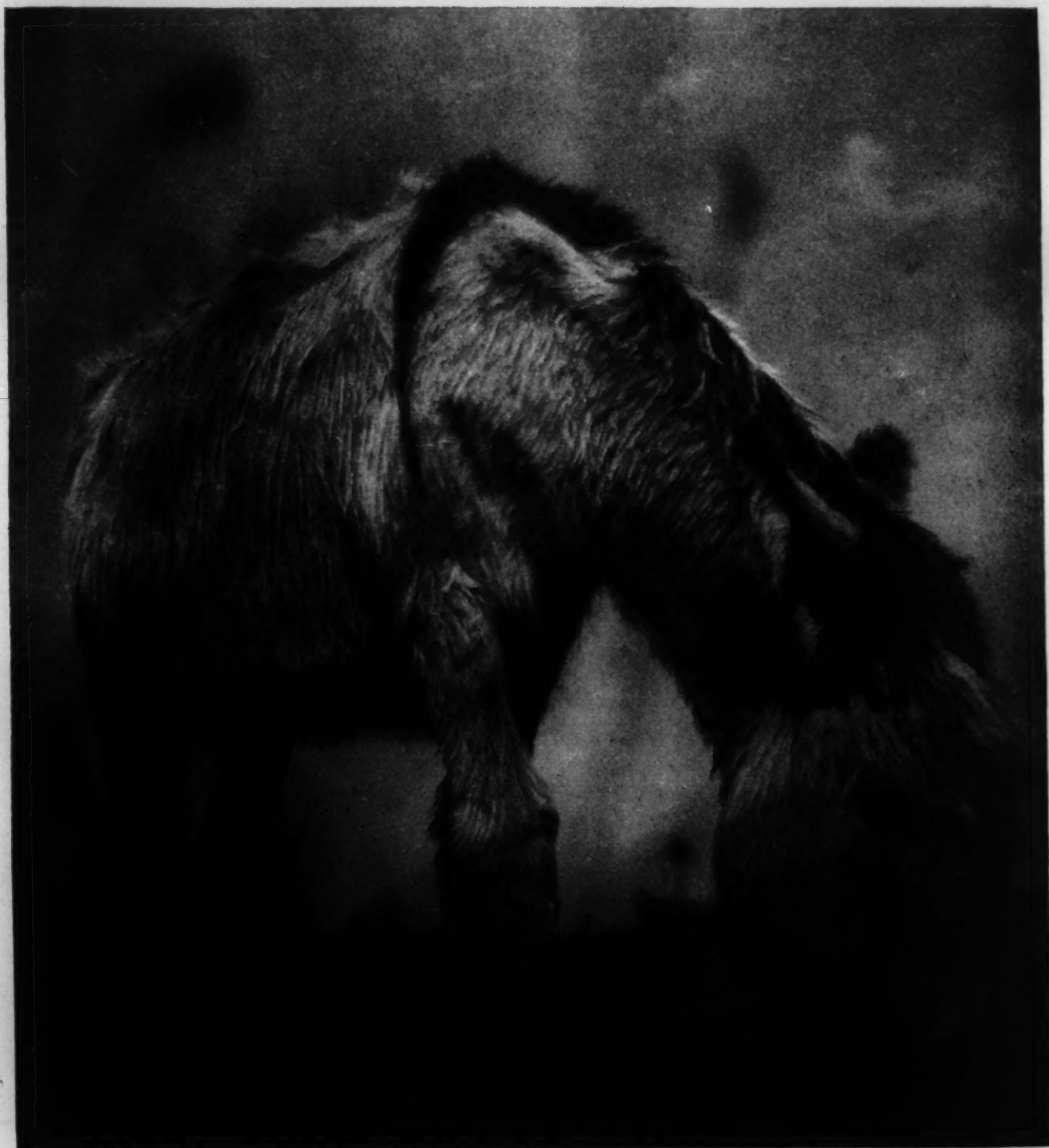
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*From a new documentary film, "Hiddensee," by Hans Casparius.
"Hiddensee," un nouveau documentaire de Hans Casparius.
Aus einem neuen Dokumentärfilm, "Hiddensee" von Hans Casparius.*

CLOSE UP

Vol. IX No. 3

September, 1932

ON THE SETS OF THE FILM "ATLANTIS"

Everybody agrees that it is the most alluring profession to be among those who create films. Those who work on films are generally looked upon with envy, not least because of the travels their profession demands of them. Film people themselves, however, are less enthusiastic about this advantage of their profession. The actors—it is true—like travelling—for them everywhere the sky is blue—but for the members of the camera staff it certainly does not signify pure pleasure, and the architect is the one who enjoys a journey least of all, for it is fatiguing and full of difficulties for him. He either travels to make studies—that he must remember so palpable a thing as an atmosphere—or has to build on the spot—with unskilled workmen, people who mostly do not at all understand what is asked. Hesitatingly only they carry out half-comprehended orders, and the architect longs for the well-organized work of the studios.

And yet there are travels which make up for everything . . . they lead into far, foreign countries and in spite of the difficulties one returns with renewed power of work and full of new impressions.

The film *Atlantis* was taken in Africa. The manuscript is based on the assumption that the legendary country Atlantis did not sink into the sea, but was buried under the sands of the Sahara. In this imaginary, subterranean country there is the subterranean castle of the lady of Atlantis, where the events of the film—after the novel by Pierre Benôit—are set. An expedition was to go to the "Hoggar" to obtain the exteriors.

Delightedly I made preparations for the journey and informed myself about everything one could learn in advance.

Books and illustrations in magazines gave me a foretaste of what was to be expected. There are not too many illustrations of the heart of the Sahara, nor could I obtain full particulars about our destination, the oasis situated in the proximity of the "Hoggar." In preparatory discussion with Mr. Pabst, the director of the film, we selected some pictures which showed the style of architecture of the people living in this region. The territory of the Hoggar situated at the boundary of two cultures—is thinly populated. Here reminiscences of the Moresque style are still to be found, while on the other hand some of the almost unknown, but charming Sudanese architecture can be traced. The pictures of the mud palaces of the negro princes filled us with sheer enthusiasm. Mr. Pabst pointed out to me these pictures as being representative of the style he wanted to see again in the sets of the film *Atlantis*, and I was glad to have the possibility of building something which would be entirely new—not only for the general public, but

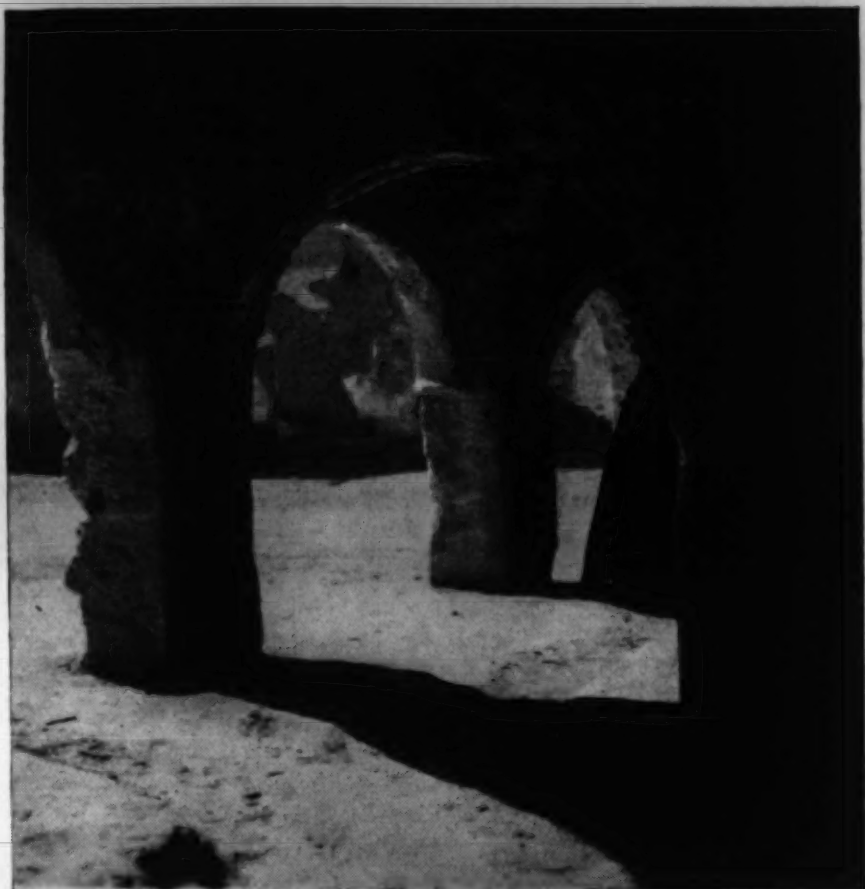


Fig. 1

also for those who knew more about the matter. In these preparatory talks, however, Mr. Pabst did not want to settle anything decisively, but was reserving for himself the final decision until he would be in the place itself and under

the influence of what was there to be seen. About one thing, however, there was not the slightest doubt: The sets should emphatically not be built in the Moresque style, for this style, though wonderful in itself, has been compromised during the last decade of cinematography by saccharine American and other films, to such a degree that it had become the very idea of bad sets and cheap fantasy in films.

Mr. Pabst went to Africa with part of the camera staff, and I was to follow him soon.

Mr. Pabst's fundamental idea for his production was that the film should strike the mass of naïve spectators as a description of real occurrences; the more clever ones in the audience, however, should recognize that the events only happened in the imagination of the hero suffering from tropic delirium. The sets had to support this object, on the one hand they must give the impression of complete reality, on the other hand this reality must be rendered improbable. The task is an interesting one, it stimulates the imagination, and while the expedition had been working already for quite a long time in Africa, I myself in my studio in Berlin tried to find the way which would combine African reality with the imaginary realm of Atlantis.

In the meantime Mr. Pabst's first snapshots from Africa arrived. In a private letter he was enthusiastic about the grandiosity of the Sahara, and incidentally I learned that for climatic reasons the expedition had not been able to reach exactly the place they had chosen as their destination. I supposed that they had found a better one. The map informed me about the place. The style of architecture we had chosen in our preparatory talks was—according to all I knew—not to be found in the place where the photographs were now being taken. I found comfort in the hope that, in the new place they had chosen for photographing, I would find other motifs, more beautiful ones and stronger in expression.

I never got to Africa, however. I was told that for technical reasons my trip could not take place. It was a grave disappointment for me, and it worried me how I would solve my task without having had the personal impressions of the place. With such big films the responsibility of every single collaborator is very great, their work is subject to the very severe criticism of the director, the experts, the newspapers and the public, and nobody can content himself with a light solution. I think, Mr. Pabst in Africa was worried as well what the sets would look like, and how the connection between exterior and interior photography could be brought about. But, for me to travel was out of question, and one had to start building. For reasons easily to be understood Mr. Pabst—accompanied by a staff and many actors—had to find the sets ready when he came back. And one day—it was not the happiest one of my life—I had to go to the studio.

The manuscript and Mr. Pabst's intentions were well known to me, but I did not know anything of what he had seen, or what had been photographed. A snapshot was at my disposal. You see it in Fig. 1. I thought that Mr. Pabst must have liked this motif—otherwise he would not have taken it—and therefore I determined to use this motif which in itself does not show much originality, as the informing motif for the building of the film set. Fig. 2 shows one part of the set very similar to the motif. It is part of the very pompously designed room in the subterranean castle of Antinea. To obtain the demanded effect of reality I tried to imitate as closely to nature as possible—not only the form of the elements but also their material. Modern architecture as well as film architecture has discovered the decorative significance of the material, and from it obtains its strongest effects. Instead of using innumerable painted or plastic ornaments, one lets the quality of the material speak for itself. In former epochs innumerable workers earned

Fig. 2





Details of sets from "l'Atlantide."
Quelques aspects de la mise en scène de "l'Atlantide."
Dekorationsdetails aus "Atlantis."





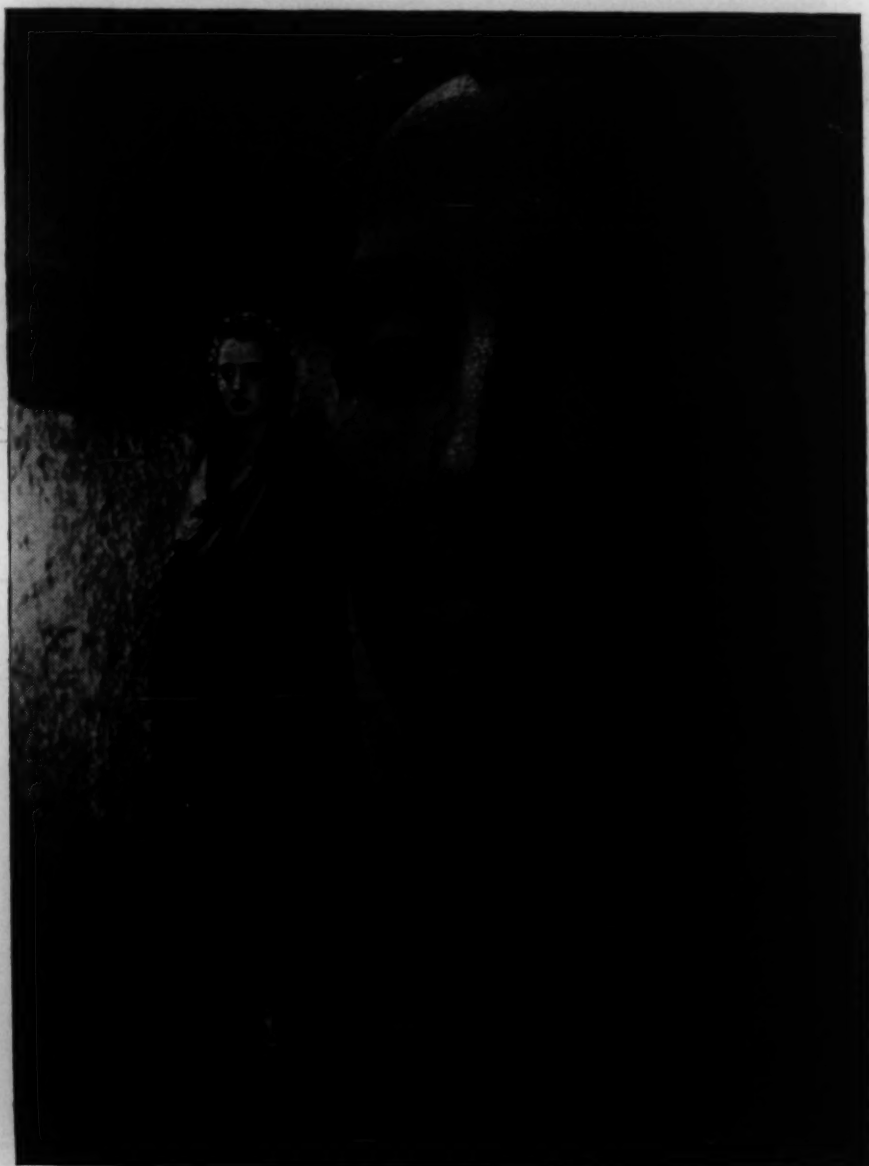
Fig. 3

their living by the decoration of buildings and of useful commodities of their time. It is surprising what an amount of joy presents itself in the ornaments of certain epochs—the joy of those who have created the ornaments and of those who found delight in the industrious work of their contemporaries. There are epochs whose products bear witness of an almost insatiable thirst for making others work. Our time where work has taken possession of everybody does not find much joy in ornaments. One is of the opinion that the wages for decorative work cannot be afforded anymore (but I think that one does not find pleasure in the work of others, since oneself has been forced to work) and prefers to spend money on precious material. The film architect tries to imitate the effect of these materials with the cheap means at his disposal. The big granite blocks in the sets of *Atlantis* looked in the studio and as I hope also in the picture—exactly like very old granite blocks, the surface of which in the course of the centuries has obtained a greasy polish. This granite of course is made of plaster—that marvellously applicable material of the studio. For this purpose a mass of plaster of light grey colour was prepared, and into it some bigger and smaller lumps of already hardened, differently coloured plaster were mixed. Thus one obtained a pail full of light grey liquid plaster, in which, mixed into it at random, light-pink, light-green, white and black lumps swam. Out of this material the stone blocks and columns were shaped. After the mass had become hardened, the surface was scraped off, and then polished. On the new surface produced by the scraping-knife, the various lumps of plaster appeared and imitated exactly the well-known characteristics of the real stone. The irregular distribution, the irregularity of the pattern could never have been

brought about by consciously applied painting or any other deliberately applied means. The surface was then treated with wax and had an extraordinary effect of reality. Their smooth surface stands in agreeable contrast to the rough casting of the arches which rest upon the stones, and stands out satisfactorily against the soft stuffs and carpets with which the rooms were equipped.

The rooms were satisfactory as to their impression of reality, but without doing any damage to this quality of theirs they had to be informed with a more costly and more fantastic suggestiveness. What was standing at that time was a heavy building with pillars, and square-built, low arches. This heavy architecture was to be raised to the realm of imagination and dream, if possible by further means of reality. I found an expedient in the use of oil-lamps. The oil-lamp is to-day still the most customary light in Africa. I covered the walls of my sets with thousands of oil-lamps, the arrangement of which is to be seen in Fig. 3. They are fastened to thin, iron bars, and linked together by hemp fibres. The thousand flickering flames are in sharp contrast to the bulky, stiff, immovable pillars. Their lively dancing light dissolves the shapes and transfers everything real into a definitely mystic atmosphere.

Some time ago the camera would not have registered much of the many lights and mystic illuminations. For only recently has been brought out a new negative sensitive to yellow and red rays, and therefore able to photograph the small dancing



*Brigitte Helm in "l'Atlantide," a
Nero production by G. W. Pabst.*

*Brigitte Helm dans "L'Atlantide,"
une production Nero de G. W.
Pabst.*

*Brigitte Helm in "Atlantis," einer
Neroproduktion von G. W. Pabst.*



From "l'Atlantide." An exclusive photograph.

"L'Atlantide." Une photographie exclusive.

Aus "Atlantis." Exklusivphoto.

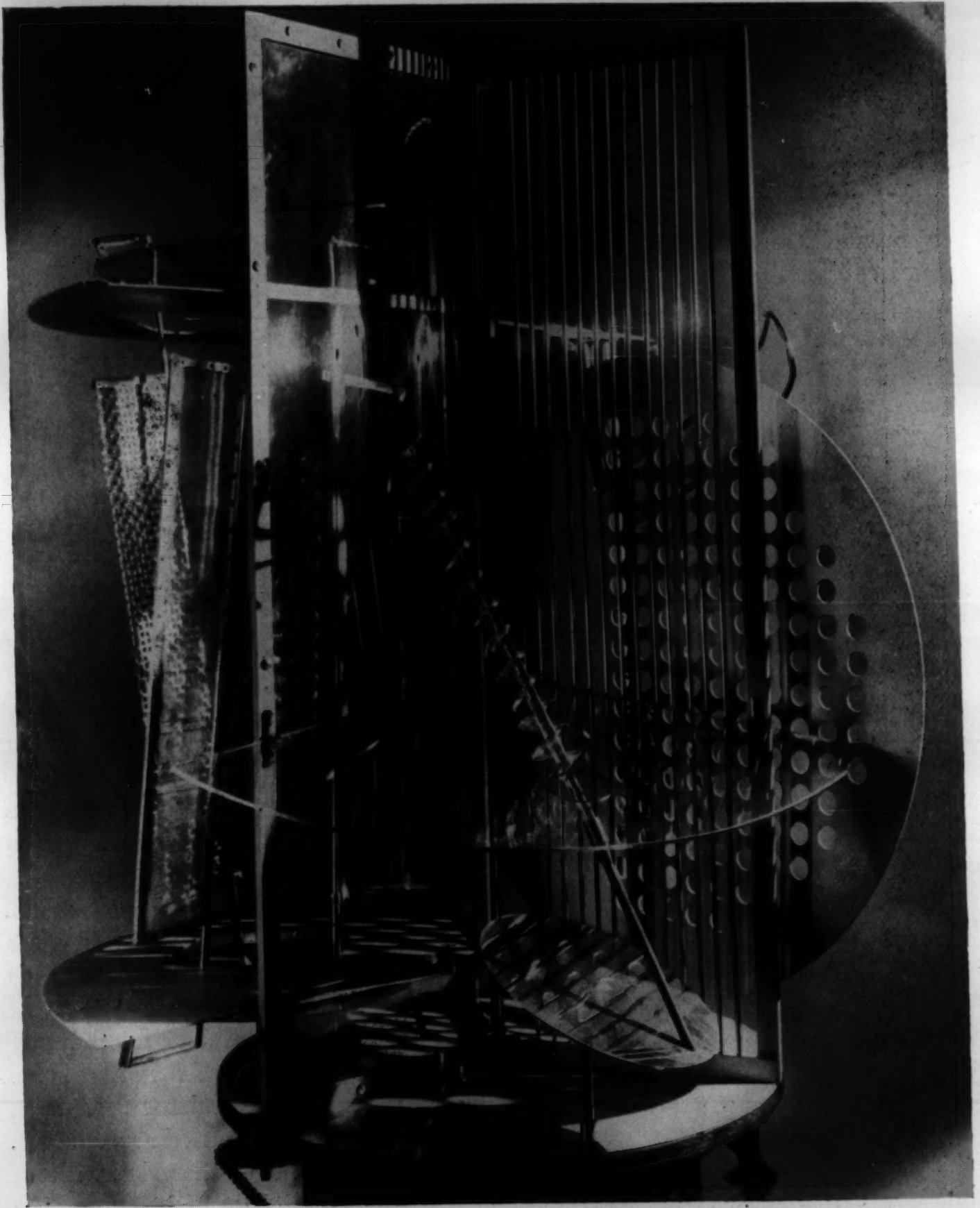
flames. This negative is very sensitive and enables the operator to light the actors sufficiently with little light only, thus allowing the tender lights of the oil-lamps to be visible as light sources.

Materials new for film buildings helped me to obtain some new effects. Slender columns were clad with a stuff which had been spun of hair-thin glass threads. The manufacturing of this material is very difficult, for the glass-threads penetrate easily into the skin and cause abscesses. The artisans had to wear gloves. But with no other material has this effect yet been achieved ; they are like the most beautiful alabaster columns and reflect the innumerable lights of the studio. Silver powder cast in gelatine achieves the effect of a mirror flexible in every direction ; varnished paper can be taken for real pig-skin, if used accordingly.

The sets of *Atlantis* were entirely built for the effects of the material, without using any ornament. Every film which suggests new problems demands new materials to obtain new effects, and by that promotes the technique of film production.

When the film was finished I learned that the technical reason which had prevented me from going to Africa had been a financial-technical one !

ERNÖ METZNER



Das Licht Requisit," Moholy Nagy.



The "Sportfest" from "Kühle Wampe," production Filmstudio 1931 directed by Dudov, scenario by Brecht.

"La Fête Sportive de Kühle Wampe." Film de Dudov, scénario de Brecht. Production, Filmstudio 1931.

"Sportfest, Kühle Wampe." Regie : Dudov. Scenario : Brecht. Produktion : Filmstudio 1931.

THE EXPERIMENT OF CHESTERFIELD

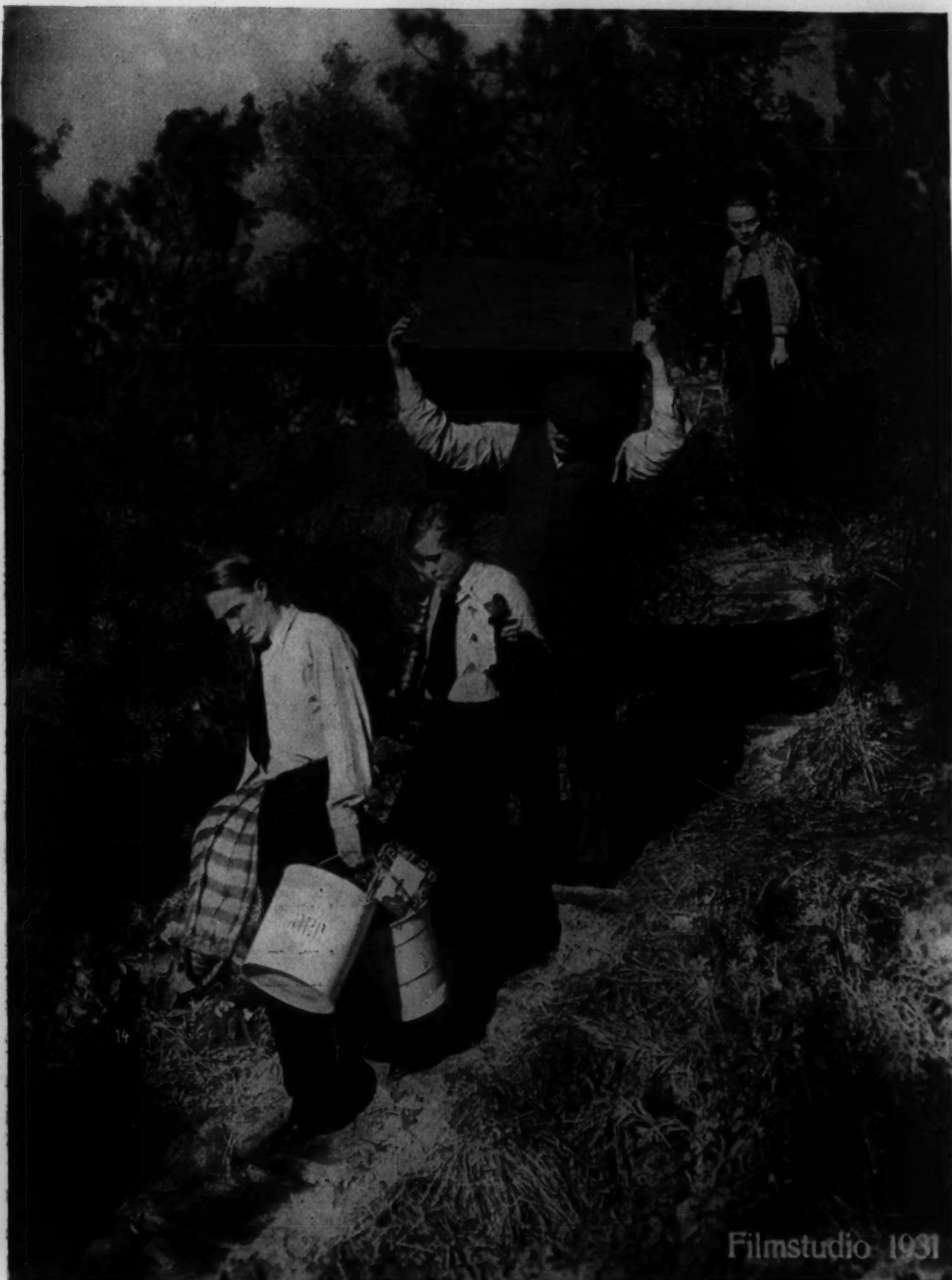
The town of Chesterfield, in Derbyshire, England, has made a film "designed to show clearly how its schools prepare the children specifically for the posts they are to fill after school life." It is pleasant to find a town using film; it is even better to find it has anything to use it on. Education in England is something that has no connection with anything else. One goes to school and learns things, and then after, when one is trying to do a great many other things at the same time, one tries also to learn the things that will be of use. But then one goes to school to learn these other things which otherwise one would never learn at all (And so say all of us). So Education is a snug little island, round which the waters of everyday life whirl. One learns to plait grass on one's island, to use swings and seesaws; and then, one leaves the island to discover that there are boats which one never learnt about, and that boats are rather essential on a sea. So one begins learning to row while one is also trying to swim. . . . Education, in England, is an end, and how literally an end, in itself.

But Chesterfield, apparently, re-organised its schools and remodelled its system, about four years ago, and then, having done that, made a film to show what it had done, and gave it its first showing at the Chesterfield Education Week in July. It is called *The New Generation*. It was suggested by a master at the William Rhodes Modern School, Chesterfield, and it was made by Stuart Legg, under the guidance, as you might imagine, of John Grierson.

It runs for twenty minutes. The first section shows shots of town life, factories and homes. The second, nursery schools, infant and junior schools. The last section shows scenes from factories and workshops, in which children who appeared in the earlier sequences are seen at the jobs that have been found for them. The framework displays the outstanding features of the Chesterfield scheme; the modernisation of every school; the fact that the education received by children up to fifteen is such as will fit them for earning a living and helping the life of the town to go on; the bias of the training in the modern schools is towards engineering, science, etc.; the children, at the end of their term at school, are interviewed by representatives of the Ministry of Labour and the local education committee, in the presence of their parents and teachers, so that they may be given the posts for which they are best fitted. And so, in twenty minutes, one follows children in arms through their infant schools, right up to the time when they first begin earning their living. It is depressing, of course, to see how relentlessly organised they all are. There does not appear to be a moment of their lives in which they can live their own lives—but one considers that, were they not organised, so many of them would have no living to live with, and so one gets over the spectacle of crowds of children unconsciously being used as counters in a game of communal planning. What emerges far more strongly than this is that all these children, instead of working selfishly for their own happiness, expressed in terms of acquiring a radio with more valves than their neighbours, are, through their work, helping the town to be progressive and productive. Finally, the film is most convincing in showing that education, on the Chesterfield system, is not something that ends with school.

Stuart Legg has made it with a capable sense of cinema. It moves in the right way, he knows what to do and he does not use anything he cannot do it with. The theme is kept in sight the whole time, and everything else is subordinate. It is a pity, but perhaps natural, that it is based on the Russian technique. There is an attempt to make subtitles dynamic, which to me only results in making them hysterical. There is too much hammer and tongs in the method, and one feels that the directors aim has been to make a little bit of new Russia in England rather than develop a new technique, ahead of the Russian, subtler and suited to a more resilient mentality and civilisation. But that is due to inferiority. It is too early for us to make the new kind of film yet. The point is that one would have thought it too late, had not *This New Generation* come along and shown not only that one town in England can remodel its educational methods, and look to the future, but use film as well. It is to Stuart Legg's credit that he lets his film, as a film, keep in the background, and be content to deliver the message it was commissioned to put over so interestingly and straightforwardly.

ROBERT HERRING.



The evicted family moves to "Kühle Wampe."
La famille évincée se rend à "Kühle Wampe."
Die gepfändete Familie übersiedelt zu "Kühle Wampe."



"Kühle Wampe."

THE MUSIC TO "HARLEQUIN"

When Lotte Reiniger showed me her new silhouette film, *Harlequin*, in Berlin in the autumn of 1931 and asked me to arrange the music to it, I was doubtful if I could do sufficient justice to this exquisitely stylised pantomime, imbued with the spirit of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*.

The preliminary sketches for *Harlequin* had been made in the summer of 1930 when Lotte Reiniger was staying with Jean Renoir in Marlotte, Fontainebleau, and at the same time Renoir had introduced her to the music of the old French masters, Lully, Couperin and Rameau. From the beginning she decided to use Lully's Minuet from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* for the funeral march and a rigaudon of Rameau for the scene where the gardener and his wife dance to Harlequin's flute, and these two scenes had accordingly been worked out with mathematical precision to ensure the picture synchronising with the music. The rest of the film had been made without any definite music in mind and, although I was able to persuade her to construct the opening scene of the angel

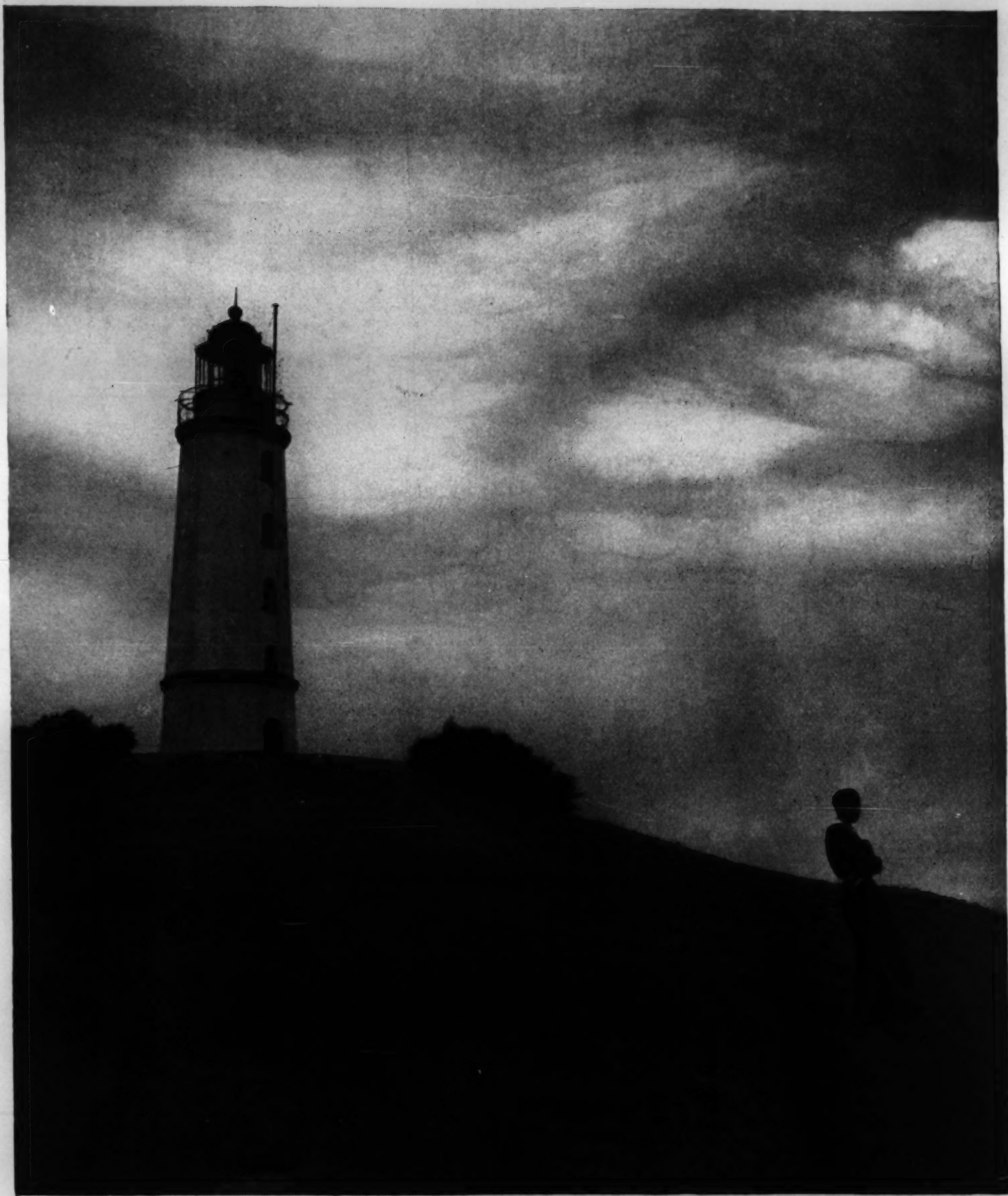


Photo by Hans Casparius, from "Hiddensee."
Photo de Hans Casparius, du film "Hiddensee."
Photo von Hans Casparius. "Hiddensee."

orchestra and the introductory dance of the *dramatis personae* so as to fit Rameau's rondeau *La Joyeuse* and to make the scene where the cat slinks across the moonlit park exactly half as long as the preceding marriage scene in order to secure a special echo effect, I found that the greater part of my task was to work out a musical score to fit an already existing film.



From "l'Atlantide," by G. W. Pabst.

"L'Atlantide," par G. W. Pabst.

Aus "Atlantis," von G. W. Pabst.

My first steps were to measure the film scene by scene and to make a collection of early eighteenth century music, which by its style and form appeared suitable as an accompaniment to this Rococo pantomime. Working in close collaboration with Lotte Reiniger herself, I soon found that the Italian composers Scarlatti and Pergolesi could be added to their French contemporaries, whereas the music of Bach (father and sons), Gluck and even Vivaldi proved completely useless for our purpose. I grouped the scenes in the film loosely into episodes, and soon learned that, although it was comparatively easy to find a piece of music whose spirit made it especially appropriate for a certain episode, the real difficulty lay in adjusting the time values. For instance, the film might give me an episode 42.5 m. long, roughly equivalent to a minute and a half when shown on the screen. If the piece of music I chose was in common time with $\text{♩} = 90$, I could use about 67 bars of it to accompany the episode, disregarding intentional or unintentional ritardandi on the part of the musicians. The next step was to make a kind of music montage, e.g., to take eight bars here, skip twelve, take the next twenty-four, return to the first eight and then jump to the coda. The main numbers of my patchwork score had then to be grouped and, if necessary, transposed so that a strict feeling for key linked them together (nearly 75% of the score is in the keys of D and G major, and their relative minors) and the gaps between the separate numbers had either to be filled in by a loose kind of voiceless recitative or (if they were not too long) left silent.

Although anything in the nature of the *leit motif* was avoided, the Capitano is accompanied on three of his appearances by the ninth couplet of Couperin's *Folies Françaises*, "Les Vieux Galans et les Trésorières Suranées," which appeared especially to suit his somewhat angular appearance and shambling gait, and the little Gavotte played during Harlequin's two marriages is echoed in the scenes where the cat crosses the moonlit park and (differently orchestrated) when the Devil appears to Harlequin in the ditch and tempts him with the promise of the wealthy spinster's money. I was also especially anxious to avoid anything in the nature of direct "photographic" sound illustration in my score. It seemed natural that where bells were seen in the film they should be heard in the orchestra, that Harlequin's arrest should be accompanied by drum taps and a short sharp drum roll used for the shots from the firing party; but I refused to allow the sneeze of one of the footmen carrying the wealthy spinster's sedan chair to be illustrated musically and insisted that the cockcrow that heralds morning after Harlequin's wedding night should be accompanied by a simple hunting call on a horn.

One of the most difficult scenes to accompany was the opening of the trial scene, where the court is momentarily in an uproar owing to the confrontation of Harlequin with Columbine, the wealthy spinster and the gardener's wife, and order is only restored by the judge ringing his bell. None of the music I had collected seemed suitable for this hubbub, and I was completely non-plussed until I had the idea of combining three of Couperin's *Folies Françaises* together (the seventh, eighth and ninth couplets). Although these three couplets had completely different time signatures ($\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$), they were all in the same key (B minor) and variations on the same harmonic ground. I entrusted one couplet to wind (flute and bassoon), another to string quartet (the Capitano's couplet) and the third to harpsichord. The ordered and logical confusion when all three were played together proved an ideal musical counterpart to the pandemonium on the screen, and when the judge rang his bell, the wind and strings stopped playing, leaving the harpsichord alone to conduct the trial scene to a solemn and proper conclusion.

The Capitano's Serenade presented peculiar difficulties, since his exaggerated gestures and the movements of his mouth could not be altered, but only cut if necessary. I ultimately found that with a little adjustment it was possible to fit in two verses of an old French song, which proved all the more appropriate since the words of its chorus were meaningless ("La tzimm, la tzimm, la tzimm, la la!") and it was important that the audience should not recognise the text of the song as being French, German or Italian. The difficulties of synchronising the song to the film, however, were still so great that in the end I was the only person who knew the Capitano's gestures well enough to dare to sing it.

Once the music was collected and the score mapped out, a further problem arose: how to orchestrate this mass of material, excerpts from operas, songs, movements from chamber suites and ordinary harpsichord pieces? For some time I toyed with the idea of scholarly exactitude, of playing all this music exactly as its composers had intended it to be played; but, apart from the difficulty of securing scores of Rameau's operas such as *Dardanus*, *Castor et Pollux*, *Zaïs*, etc., I soon



Photo by Hans Casparius from "Hiddensee."

Photo de Hans Casparius de "Hiddensee."

Foto Hans Casparius von "Hiddensee."

found that this idea was impractical. It was much better to bind the score into an organic whole by rescoring the music (where necessary) in its entirety.

Starting from the point of view that conditions in a modern film studio make it possible to control the volume of sound by technical means, I decided to write for a chamber orchestra in which no instrument would be doubled. A harpsichord was obviously essential, both for solo-work and as continuo; to it I added a string quartet and a body of wind instruments, flute, clarinet (perhaps this should have been an oboe), horn and bassoon. The percussion included three bells and a side drum. This orchestra of nine enabled me to secure an extraordinary variety of tone-colour. The opening Rondeau of Rameau (*La Joyeuse*), for instance,



From "*L'Atlantide*." A Nero film by G. W. Pabst.

"*L'Atlantide*," un Nero Film de G. W. Pabst.

Aus "*Atlantis*." Ein Nerofilm von G. W. Pabst.

though originally intended as a harpsichord solo, was scored for string quartet with flute and clarinet soli. Two songs of Pergolesi (*Se tu m'ami* and *Ogni pena più spietata*) had naturally a continuous harpsichord accompaniment, while their vocal line was broken up and tossed about from instrument to instrument, its imitative form proving especially appropriate for contrasted tonal effects. The scoring of the couplets of Couperin's *Folies Françaises* has already been indicated above. Harpsichord, first violin, flute and bassoon were given opportunities for extended solo work ; and no chance was lost of contrasting the peculiar tone values of the three groups of this chamber orchestra : harpsichord, strings and wind.

Owing to my preoccupation in keeping the musical line clear and bare and never allowing one part to double another unless absolutely necessary, the music gives an impression of transparency, terseness and acrobatics. A feeling of tension pervades the score—one false note and the whole structure would collapse ! But the musicians and conductor served me so well that it does not collapse. In fact, the music succeeds in providing the film with a refreshing and invigorating accompaniment, underlining the pantomime of the *commedia dell'arte* figures and even bringing out new and unsuspected beauties in the interplay of their moods and gestures. And that is all I hoped to achieve.

The following is a rough sketch of the works used in the score in the order in which they appear :—

1. Rondeau : " La Joyeuse " (Pièces de Clavecin), D major, Rameau—Angelic concert and opening ballet in the clouds.
2. Rigaudon, G. major (" Dardanus " edition 1744), Rameau—Harlequin meets the gardener and his wife.
3. 2nd Rigaudon (Pièces de Clavecin), Rameau—The gardener and his wife dance to Harlequin's flute.
4. Middle movement of 2, G minor—Harlequin in the park ; Colombine bathing at the spring.
5. Intermède II in G major (French version) of " La Serva Padrona," Pergolesi—Harlequin follows Colombine.
6. " La Chanson du Tambourineur " (18th century)—The Capitano serenades the wealthy spinster.
7. Les Folies Françaises, ou Les Dominos (extraits du 13^e ordre) 9^e couplet, " Les Vieux Galans et les Trésorières Suranées " (Sous les Dominos pourpres et feuilles mortes), Couperin—The Capitano gives money and a love-letter to Harlequin.
8. " Se tu m'ami," Pergolesi.—The wealthy spinster reads the love-letter in her boudoir.
9. Middle movement of Gavotte in G major from the ballet-opera " Zaïs," Rameau—Harlequin's first marriage (Colombine).
10. Same as 5—Harlequin and Colombine in the park.
11. Gavotte in E major from the opera " Castor et Pollux," Rameau—The wealthy spinster is carried in a sedan-chair through the wood.
12. Tambourin in E minor from the opera " Les Fetes d'Hébé," Rameau—The robbers hold up the wealthy spinster in the wood.
13. Opening and middle movements of 9 (re-orchestrated)—Harlequin rescues the wealthy spinster from the ditch. Appearance of the devil.
14. Same as 7, but with a different time-signature—The wounded captain drags himself through the moonlit wood.
15. Same as 9—Harlequin's second marriage (the wealthy spinster). A cat crosses the park.
16. Same as 5, but in G minor—The wealthy spinster leads Harlequin to her house.
17. " Ogni Pena più spietata," Pergolesi—Harlequin in the wealthy spinster's bedroom.
18. Les Folies Françaises, 7^e couplet, " La Langueur " (sous le Domino violet), Couperin—Colombine and Harlequin alone in their bedrooms.
19. Les Folies Françaises, 8^e couplet, " La Coquèterie " (sous différents Dominos), Couperin—Harlequin meets Colombine in the morning.
20. Pièces en Concert, III " La Tromba," Couperin—Harlequin and Colombine are discovered by the wealthy spinster.
21. Same as 7—The Capitano comes to the wealthy spinster.
22. Nos. 7, 18 and 19 together—Harlequin's trial.
23. Minuet from " Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," Lully—Funeral March.

24. "O Cessate di piangarmi," Scarlatti—Colombine kneels by Harlequin's dead body.
25. Intermède I, Allegro, from "La Serva Padrona," Pergolesi—Appearance of the Devil.
26. Intermède II, Finale in D major from "La Serva Padrona," Pergolesi—Happy end.

ERIC WALTER WHITE.



*From "Studie 8." A new film by Oskar Fischinger.
"Studie 8," nouveau film musical d'Oscar Fischinger.
Aus "Studie 8." Ein neuer Film von Oscar Fischinger.*



*From "Studie 8." A new film by Oskar Fischinger.
"Studie 8," nouveau film musical d'Oscar Fischinger.
Aus "Studie 8." Ein neuer Film von Oskar Fischinger.*



*From "Studie 8." A new film by Oskar Fischinger.
"Studie 8," nouveau film musical d'Oscar Fischinger.
Aus "Studie 8." Ein neuer Film von Oscar Fischinger.*



"Decameron Nights." A "Back to Primitives" early Ufa film. See "Close Up," June, 1932.
 "Les Nuits du Decameron." Un ancien film Ufa de la série des types primitifs. Voir "Close Up,"
 Juin 1932.

"Decamerone." Ein früher "Zurück zum Primitiven"—Ufafilm. Siehe "Close Up," Juni, 1932.

VERTOV AD ABSURDAM

In the old silent days, before dumbness become vocal, when platinum was gold and proud of it, the idea of the first personal film was fairly often suggested. Since the revolution it seems to have disappeared, which, amongst so depressing a paucity of ideas and material in the commercial cinema, is a pity. It seems curious that it has not been revived, as a sort of psuedo-intelligent gesture of the kind that (chorus of voices saying *Sunrise*) catches the rabble and may deceive many even of the elect. After all, the idea of a film in which the camera is the narrating participant should not be difficult for a public which is accustomed to read about detective heroes who tell their own energetic good fortune, which was

reared on *Kidnapped* (and that is the untapped audience) or Sexton Blake with Tinker (is it ?) telling the story. Splash this rather simple concept at the infinitely simple audience, and the thrill will cause infinite paper fodder for weeks, and someone's fortune will be considerably increased. For the first personal joke, for a little, is not a bad one. The character of the camera might, as a concession and with Vertov's permission, be given a mirror physiognomy, but it would be better for the individuals of the audience to credit the tripod with their own beauty. It could not be more immoral than identification with the usual muscular child-man or henna'd helpless. I would suggest a simple hearty story, like *Treasure Island*. Or, more topically, occasional verisimilitude could be given by the introduction of a hand containing a cigarette to just below the camera, which would of course be swivelling and tracking in the most tasteless manner all over the place : very outmoded and nauseating, but perhaps useful.* The camera audience

* A camera smoking, yawning, drinking, getting hiccups, looking down and admiring its own knees, has been so often suggested that finally we are constrained to believe it has a wider application to the jaded than we thought—hence, in fact, the publication of this here. *Ed.*



"*Spanish Passions.*" Another "*Back to Primitives*" with Pola Negri.

"*Passions espagnoles,*" encore un film primitif, avec Pola Negri.

"*Spanische Leidenschaft.*" Noch ein "*Zurück zum Primitiven*"—Film mit Pola Negri.

would have a voice, which might very well come from the back of the cinema, if enterprise could not project it from every seat. Think of the headlines: "Starring You!" For there ought to be a starlight saving time.

All rather worthless? Of course. But it is the sort of experiment which, though scarcely worth artist's laughter, might stimulate a lot the painted elephant of tottering box-officialdom. Why stimulate it? Because it is still fairly popular and vigorous in its extravagant, decadent way, and for the time being it *exists*. Out of strength comes forth sweetness and light, and its public is the strength of the cinema. Sociologically—to educate the public—or aesthetically—to promote the medium—you must hold your nose and fondle the Box Office. It smashes a lot of toys. But now it is growing up, and this one may be as good as many.

The first personal talkie still has a hope.

PENNETHORNE HUGHES.

PABST—DOVJENKO—A COMPARISON

During the last few months London has been privileged to view the work of the Austrian Director Georgi Pabst at the Academy Cinema, Oxford Street, where his *Westfront* 1918 and *Kameradschaft* have recently been shown, thus enabling English audiences to become acquainted with the creations of this genius of the flashing art.

By now critics all over the world have acclaimed Pabst as one of the greatest directors the world of the Kinema has brought forth and place his work on the same plane as that of the great Soviet masters Sergej Michaelovitch Eisenstein and V. I. Pudovkin. There is no doubt that, like them, he too has left his mark on the development of the film.

Pabst can, by no means, be regarded as a director of the new school, brought into prominence by the talking film, but he belongs on the contrary, to that small company of directors who have achieved distinction in both, the silent and the sound film. He attracted our attention as early as 1925, when for Sofar he produced the well-known *Joyless Street*, featuring Greta Garbo, together with such famous names as Asta Nielsen, Werner Krauss and Agnes Esterhazy. Others will remember him from the Brigitte Helm film *Love of Jeanne Ney*, based on Ilja Ehrenburg's novel, a film which was outstanding for the vigorous photography of Fritz Arno Wagner.

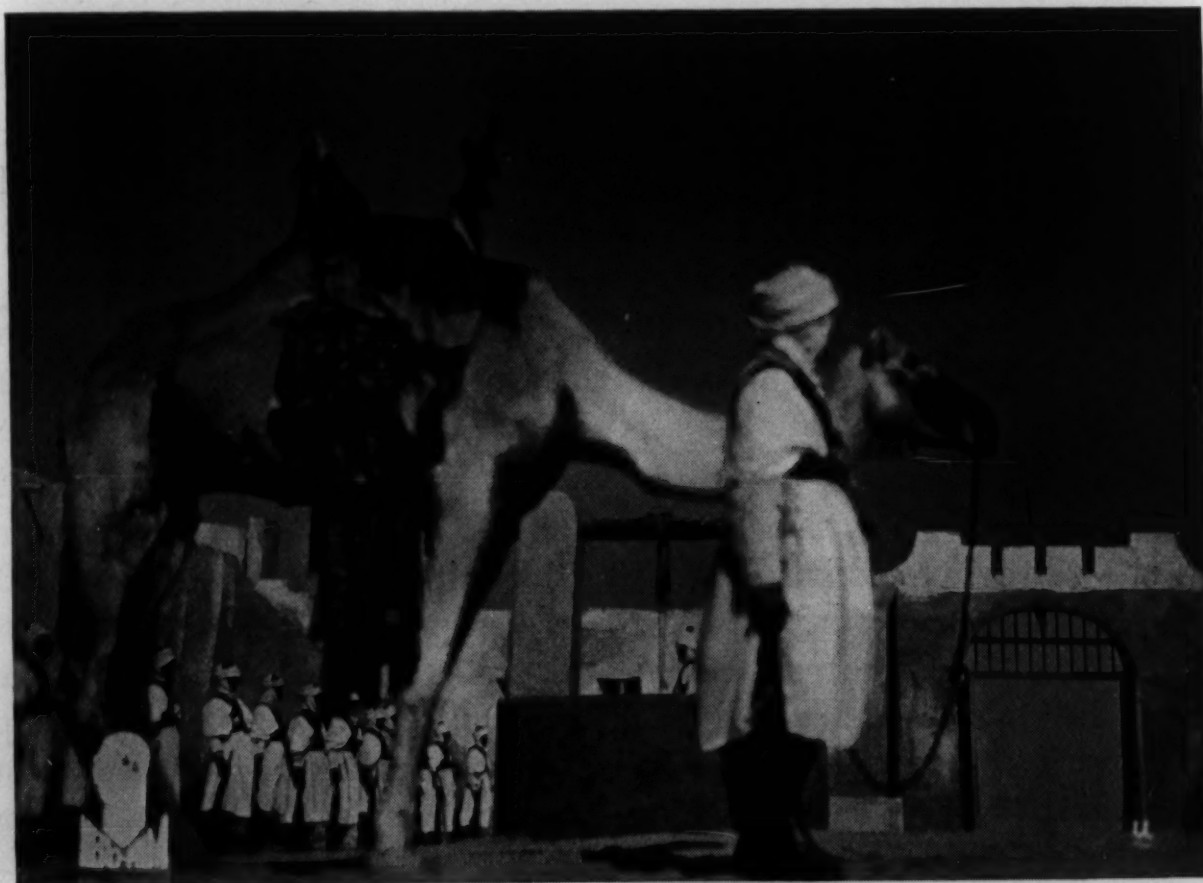
And now London audiences have been given the opportunity to judge for themselves the works of this master craftsman. As generally, in the case of unusual films, the majority of British critics were unable to deal with the subject



Unpublished photographs from "l'Atlantide," by G. W. Pabst.

Quelques clichés encore inconnus de "l'Atlantide," réalisation de G. W. Pabst. Production: Nero-Film.

Bisher unveröffentlichte Photos aus "Atlantis." Regie: G. W. Pabst. Produktion: Nero-Film.



adequately, with the result that both, his *Westfront* and *Kameradschaft*, were criticised with the same fervour and received almost equally flattering notices. On closer examination, however, we find that we can safely eliminate the former from the list of film classics and that, of the two films, only *Kameradschaft* deserves serious attention. I will go even further and say that the war-film did not show us Georgi Pabst in his happiest mood and it certainly compares unfavourably with his next work *Die Dreigroschenoper*. *Kameradschaft*, on the other hand, is as near to filmic perfection as one can expect to-day.

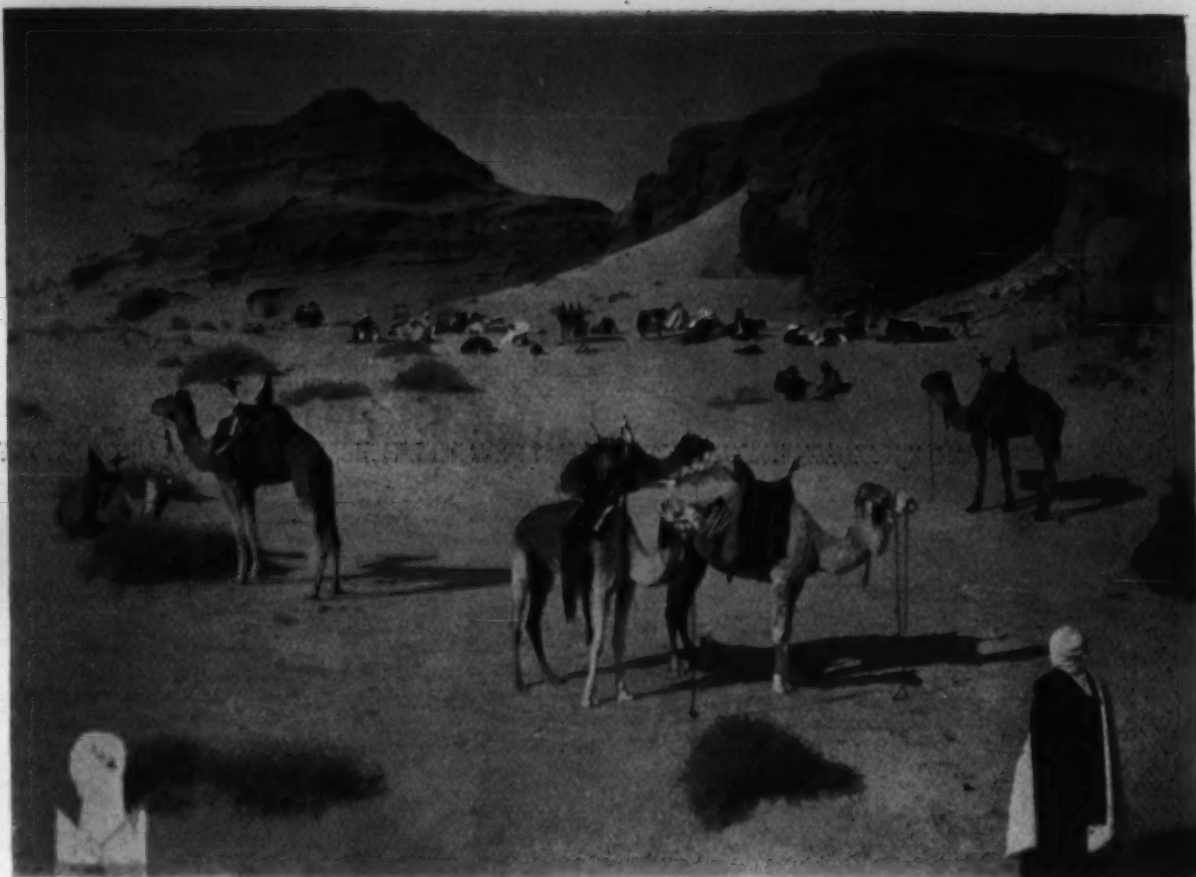
I do not wish to convey the impression that *Westfront* 1918 is a worthless effort, deserving of no consideration whatsoever. On the contrary, for the film still stands head and shoulders above its American contemporaries. But in its treatment and more especially in its subject matter the film closely resembles another picture dealing with a similar subject, namely Dovjenko's *Arsenal*, the tragic story of a workers' rising in a munition factory at Kiev.

At the making of this film for the Ukranian State Cinema Vufku, O. Dovjenko was by no means the world-famous director his later production *Earth* made him, though at that time many advanced critics already considered his work of the same high standard set by the creators of *Mother* and *Potemkin*.

Let us, for a moment, compare the two pictures, and it will be observed that both directors, with profound understanding, dealt with one of the most sordid aspects of war, namely the woman who remained behind. Much has been written about these tragic affairs of soldiers whose place at home has been taken by somebody else and there is no subject which can more easily become a trivial drama of love. This delicate subject, however, was treated by both directors with equal skill and sincerity, though on a quite different basis, and the Dovjenko portrayal was more powerful in its simplicity. I still have a vivid recollection, after so many years, of the solitary figure of a woman standing in a darkened room. The camera work of this scene was almost technically perfect, with the light playing only on the window, revealing part of the woman's face. In her arms she held a baby. Then a soldier—or the ghost of a soldier—passed across the window and the wall and from similar corners rose similar mothers, facing similar ghosts who questioned them. . . .

This incident was composed with a touch of real artistry, powerful in its appeal, yet constructed with the utmost simplicity, revealing in its stark realism and delicate photography the hand of a master. Thus Dovjenko summed up the drama of the situation, once and for all, in his nimble play of light and shade.

In further comparing the two films we also observe that the opening sequences of *Arsenal* are superior to those of the Pabst picture. Here Dovjenko makes amazing use of the expressive short cut; a cutting of close-ups from different angles. They are unsurpassed in their representation and a master-work of brutal brilliance. The successive scenes at the opening of the Soviet film are gripping in their sordidness and show clearly the work of a genius in their power and scope, while the sequences, as a whole, are overwhelming. What emotional play that Russian cameraman—Demutski I think it was—made of these opening scenes!



*From "l'Atlantide." An exclusive photograph.
 "L'Atlantide." Une photographie exclusive.
 Aus "Atlantis." Exklusivphoto.*

Outstanding amongst them is the incident of the woman leaning against the wall of her house—motionless. It is in such scenes of immobility that Dovjenko reaches the greatest height of his expression. She still looks young, the woman, but her pose betrays a great weariness. A drunken soldier appears, his sabre trailing behind him. In one impressive shot Dovjenko again sums up the whole situation. Down the street the soldier marches till he finally halts in front of the woman. He raises his hand and fondles her. But she does not move and so he passes on. That is all. A scene of utter simplicity. But what a scene! Terrible in its reality; profoundly moving in its sobriety.

Destruction and war go hand in hand, but whereas Pabst endeavoured to show us the destruction of the war on the battlefield, Dovjenko went one further and showed us the destruction of war in the home; scenes conveying the misery, the hunger and the destitution which war inevitably brings on a country. He showed us in stark reality, the effects of it all on the population: the cruelty, the jealousy and the hatred. The camera-eye traces for us a family degenerating. We are shown a mother in her home, surrounded by her small children. A scene of hunger and desolation. With his inborn film sense, Dovjenko brings out the suffering of the mother, not only for herself, but for her children as well. In the



*From "l'Atlantide." An exclusive photograph.
 "L'Atlantide." Une photographie exclusive.
 Aus "Atlantis." Exklusivphoto.*

corner we notice the father, smaller than the children, a cripple maimed by the war and sent home. The woman is silent while the children whimper and tug at her skirt. Outside, on the field, a one-armed man, stumbling with weakness and famine is leading an old horse—no, not a horse, but the caricature of a horse—starved and deformed. A sudden rage overcomes them all, the woman in the house and the man in the field; a madness of cruelty. The mother spitefully lashes out at her children and the man in the field kicks and beats the old and half starved horse so furiously that he falls exhausted to the ground beside the animal, which waits patiently for his master to stand up again. . . .

That was the war Dovjenko showed us. There is no symbolism about it, but fragments of reality set end to end.

Georgi Pabst in his *Westfront* retaliates with his study of the war profiteer and the old mother, who does not quite grasp the meaning of it all. He also gives us the humour, which the Soviet master so sadly lacks.

There is one further incident which confirms the theory of incidental treatment of both war films. In his final scenes Pabst makes one last desperate effort to convey to us, not only the horror of war, but its futility and its gross stupidity as well, by giving us a glimpse of a Westfront hospital, a scene almost cynical in its ruthless strength. For a moment his camera runs amok in this human

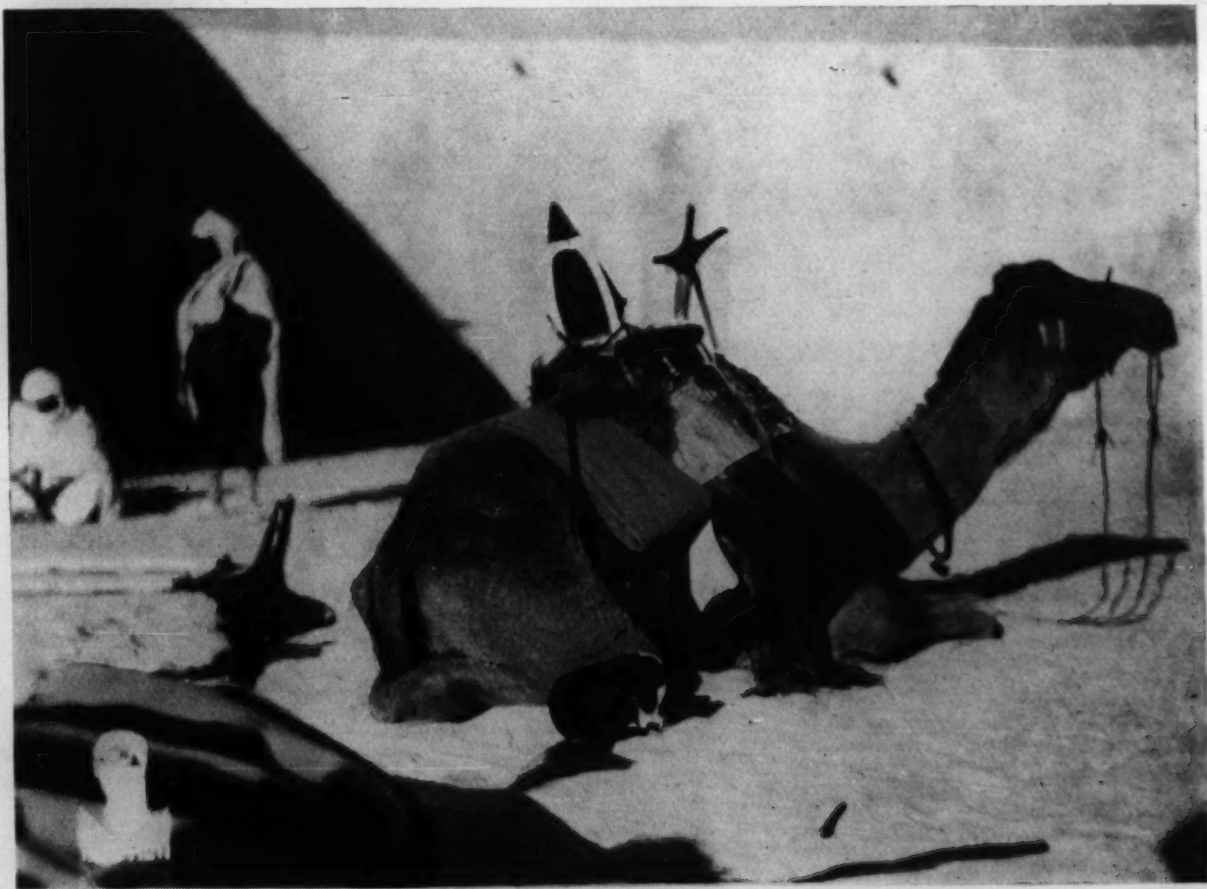
slaughterhouse, jumping from the butchered young men, maimed and mutilated beyond recognition just to satisfy the vanity of a handful of statesmen in different countries, to the attending doctors who collapse under the strain of their never ending task. Till finally his camera comes to rest at the stretcher of a dying young German with a French soldier lying beside him in a delirium, begging frantically his forgiveness. And while the French soldier babbles forth his torrent of words, the German comrade passes quietly away.

Dovjenko, on the other hand, showed us the nurse writing a letter for a wounded soldier, lying in an ambulance. The letter is meant for his wife. When the soldier has finished dictating, there is a silence. "What address?", asks the nurse. There is no reply. There never will be.

The Dovjenko film ends with the shedding of the blood of the liberators on a note of extreme anguish. . . .

This, in short, is the analysis of the two films and in the rivalry between the directors the honour goes, on this occasion, to the Soviet master. But Georgi Pabst had his revenge in his *Epic of the Mines*. Long after other films will be forgotten, this one will live vividly in our memory, for here he has produced a truly great film, a document of human suffering and endurance, beside which the productions of our great money makers seem more than ever ridiculous.

When I left the Academy Cinema after the showing of the Pabst war-film, which had so poignantly recalled the emotions I had experienced many years ago



From "L'Atlantide." An exclusive photograph.

"L'Atlantide." Une photographie exclusive.

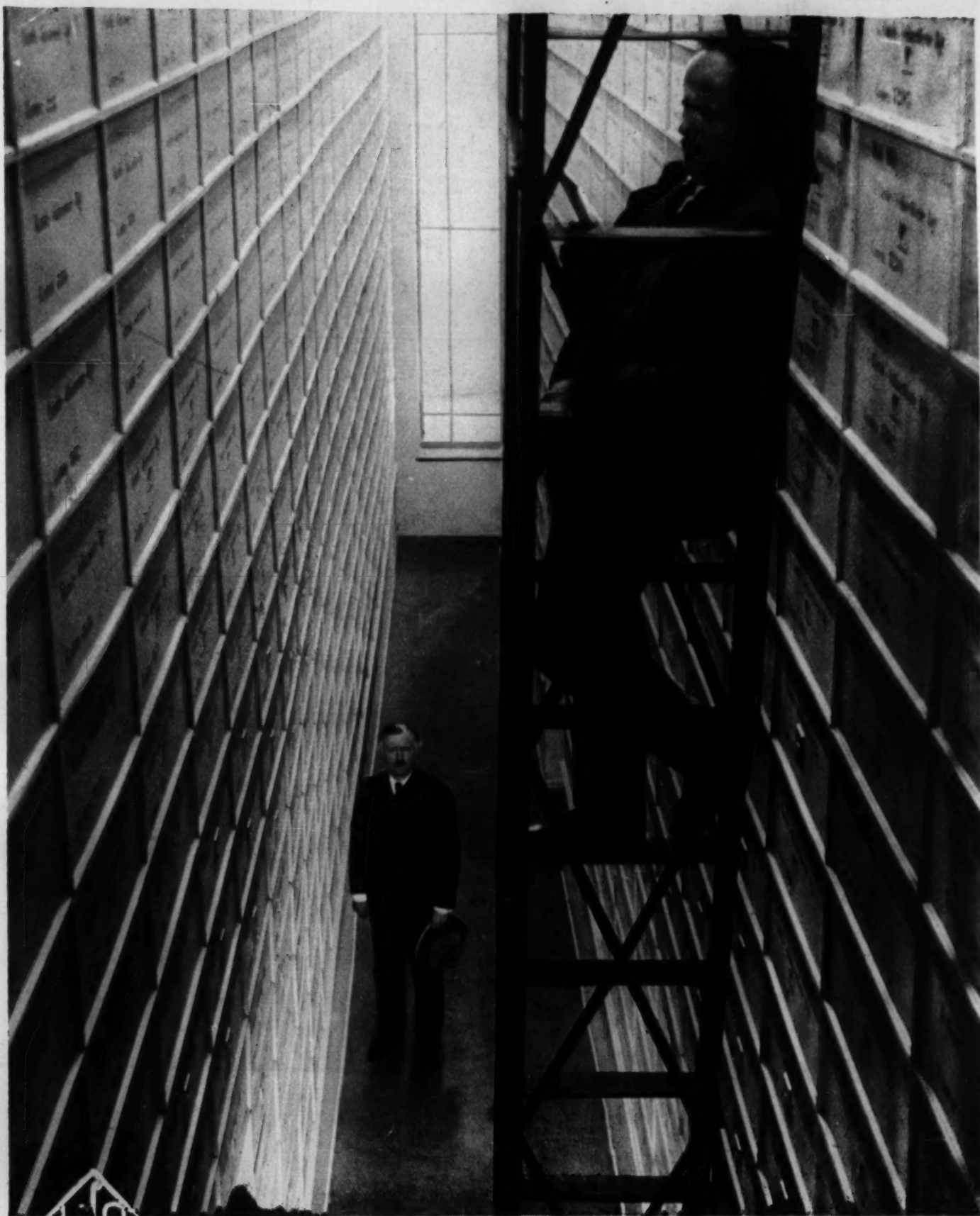
Aus "Atlantis." Exklusivphoto.



*From "l'Atlantide." An exclusive photograph.
"L'Atlantide." Une photographie exclusive.
Aus "Atlantis." Exklusivphoto.*

when first seeing *Arsenal*, I suddenly realised that maybe round the corner in one of the luxury palaces another war film was being shown where, at the end, the hero returns home to the accompaniment of the theme song—yes, my dear readers, wounded, for he wears his arm in a sling—and the final fadeout shows us the heroine tenderly embracing her beloved hero, whilst glycerine tears fall down her face. It was then that I sadly recalled the fact that after all it was America that won the war!

JOHN C. MOORE.



*From "Men Without Name," a new Ufa production, with Werner Krauss and Gerhard Wienert.
Production G. Stapenhorst, Director Gustav Ucicky.*

*"Les hommes sans nom," nouvelle production Ufa, avec Werner Krauss et Herhard Wienert. Metteur
en scène : Gustav Ucicky. Production : G. Stapenhorst.*

*Aus "Mensch ohne Namen," einem neuen Ufafilm mit Werner Krauss und Gerhard Wienert
Produktion : G. Stapenhorst. Regie : Gustav Ucicky.*



"Sportfest, Kühle Wampe." Directed by Dudov, scenario by Brecht. Production, Filmstudio, 1931.

"La Fête Sportive de Kühle Wampe." Film de Dudov, scénario de Brecht. Production, Filmstudio 1931.

"Sportfest, Kühle Wampe." Regie : Dudov. Scenario : Brecht. Produktion : Filmstudio 1931.

THE GERMAN FILM SEASON 1932/1933

Berlin. End of July.

At exactly the same time every year the film trade papers flourish. The "filmlessness," emptiness of the cinemas, struggles about taxation, all the tiring subjects of the summer are adjourned by the editorial offices. The new distribution programmes have arrived, and so have the first advertisement bookings. And these reflect the season to be, how it may shape itself eventually, what may be its ultimate form.

Both the time, which will be the frame of the season, and the spirit which will paint the picture for the frame, are reflected in the notices.



"Kühle Wampe."

The film producer is no Maecenas and still less does he want to become the martyr of any conviction. He is a merchant with a strong sense of the present and a slight irritation about the future, rather more anxious than usual this year; which subject is to be chosen, which actor and which tone?

Eighty per cent of the German films for the coming season have been announced. They number 112. A trade paper has listed them according to their subjects: 20 historical or patriotic pictures, 7 military comedies, 23 other cheerful subjects, 30 adventure, criminal or sport films, 9 with insistence on landscape, 11 chiefly musical pictures, 7 literary and problem films. The announced titles give more detailed characterisations of the different ranges they cover. For example, where landscape is predominant, *Green is the Heath*, *The Puszta is Shining*, *Adventure in the Engadine*. Or musical films: *The Flower of Hawaii*, *When the Violins Sound*, *Johann Strauss*, *Imperial Royal Court Conductor*. In literary and problem films we have *Morals and Love*, *Daughters of Good Families*, *Weird Affairs*.

Almost twenty per cent of the German films are produced by the Ufa. This time it announces 23 principal films. Not all films announced, however, are actually turned. In many studios the chief actor—the money—fails to appear. The Ufa, however, has a cash capital of 8½ millions. The returns on foreign sales were 45% higher than last year, visitors to the Ufa cinemas numbered 1½ millions

more. Herrn Hugenberg's organisers have made the Ufa a sober enterprise conveying its articles directly and immediately to the consumer, one which in estimating the political atmosphere also calculates more reservedly than the small, frightened producers. Only one of Ufa's 23 films is listed as a "national super picture." Among the others 9 are adventure, criminal and sport films, 8 musical comedies, and 3 are characterized as "films of current problems," for example *Alarm on Track B*.

Titles nowadays have little to do as a rule with the subject matter that they are supposed to cover. Nothing else, however, to be anticipated of the coming productions conveys any impression of encouragement.

Let us look at the casts. Ufa chooses its collaborators consistently from above the average. Distinguished people who had dreams years ago, but who have collected too much professional knowledge since to be ambitious. Balanced and smoothed scenarios are at their disposal, a first rate production apparatus and actors with routine and a ready coined profile. If a new man gets among them by any chance who might have plans of his own, he is so cautiously embedded in their oiled mechanism that nothing can happen. The Ufa wishes neither to surprise nor be surprised. It is true—it's chief of production said recently: "We have the opportunity to create films, whether amusing or serious does not matter, which do not deal simply with entertainment, but in which questions are asked which we have to answer. In future we want to see in films men who pursue a distinct aim, who, because of their character, fight against their surroundings, who strive mentally towards a worthy objective, and attain it neither by chance or the use of unfair means." Do problems of this kind really worry Mr. E. H. Correll very much?

The interests of film people have shifted enormously; from the subject to what really matters, money. Some years ago their talks still resembled the discussions of other young artists. There were struggles about ideas, methods, and solutions. Authors were absorbed in atmospheres. Directors would hunt for motifs for weeks. Architects clung to styles, camera men dreamt of new objectives. To-day the director's conferences resemble the discussion of a savings association. Authors have to find scenes to fit sets another firm has left in the studio. Directors alter complexes desperately in order to have to pay the star a four days' salary only. Architects are appreciated according to how little material and time they use up, and the cameraman as to how many camera angles he can manage per day. Nobody has time for experiments, or only if they help economy.

The preponderance of economic considerations also changes the character of the young artists' collective societies. Their hunger to create is overshadowed by the lack of capital. In former and quieter times they could point out new ways to film art. Meantime the *Kollektiv* has become a cheap expedient for penniless enterprisers. But in spite of that, these endeavours remain important, for in them a future form of film organisation is developing while the present one is almost suffocated under the pressure of finance and bureaucracy. The collectives save what enthusiasm remains for film as an art.

The remaining possibility, which would be to stimulate the production of short subjects, is still unexploited. Ufa it is true has announced 12 two reel films, but proceeds historically and moves the level of these first German short pictures

back to 1910. It is too funny to watch by what means the young generation, in the first specimen of this series, *The False Tenor*—hope to produce a comic effect.

If the general director of the Ufa, Mr. Ludwig Klitzsch, had seen this little film before his thorough lecture over the radio, he would have been less enthusiastic perhaps, in his estimate of the progress of the German sound film since 1929. A mistake such as the confusion of the elements of sound, film technique and film craft, with the artistic growth of the sound film, could not have happened to him in his other province, as the head of the Scherl publishing firm. Mr. Klitzsch measures the progress of the film by the approach of the levels of cinema and theatre and forgets that this approach is possible only through the incomparably bigger step made backward by the stage play than forward by the film. For years we tread the same spot and call it motion. Perhaps in this manner we advance a little, for time runs back past us.

A. KRASZNA-KRAUSZ.



Kühle Wampe

Filmstudio 1931

The occupants of a Berlin tenement point up to the window from which an unemployed boy jumped to death, in "Kühle Wampe."

Les locataires d'un immeuble ouvrier désignent la fenêtre d'où un jeune chômeur s'est précipité afin d'en finir avec la vie. "Kühle Wampe."

Die Bewohner eines Berliner Miethauses deuten auf das Fenster, aus welchem sich ein arbeitsloser Junge gestürzt hat. "Kühle Wampe."

THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN BRUSSELS

July, 1932.

The International Exhibition of Photography in Brussels, July, 1932, made an interesting attempt to show the achievements of photography both in its application to different purposes and as an art. The collection shown in the well-equipped rooms of the Palais de Beaux Arts was so big and comprehensive that it was impossible to see everything at a single visit for it contained more than a thousand photographs. It was divided into ten sections: beside the largest one devoted to photography as an art, specimens of rayography and photomontage, there were rich collections of photographs used for advertisements, for reporting, as book illustrations and in cinematography. There was the beautiful section of aerophotography and of the use of the camera in scientific research, a special set of pictures from Soviet Russia and finally some autochromes.

Among the artists who have contributed art photographs were well known names of international importance such as Man Ray, Renger-Patzsch, Germaine Krull, Sasha Stone, Aenne Biermann and others. It was remarkable how many of the pictures were portraits, most of them enlarged to more than life size. I liked the ones of Sasha Stone (the portraits of Einstein, Liebermann, and different types from the plays in the Oberammergau, and the studies of Prince Tito). Man Ray's interesting shots were not put under glass or in a frame but fastened on an unpolished Triplex plate which gave an original and tasteful effect. Besides the portraits there were beautiful close ups of flowers and animals (by Renger-Patzsch especially), landscapes, studies of modern and old architecture, still life studies, etc. Very big enlargements of tissues, the human skin, flowers, never failed to have an amazing effect. Whereas the effect of rayography and photomontage seemed less impressive once the appeal of novelty had been lost and gave way to sound photography, which does not require too much thought, like photomontage—or too little, like rayophotography.*

The use of the photograph as advertisement is daily on the increase, due to its efficiency, which again is rooted in its realism of expression. If I see the glittering bottles, or the toothbrushes, standing up like trees (taken by Bresson), I want to touch them, and receive therefore that favourable impression which is advertisement's aim.

The cinema section included stills from the best films produced in recent years. The Russian film was represented by Pudovkin, Eisenstein, Turin, Trauberg, Ekk and others: the English film by Kenneth Macpherson, with an interesting set of stills from *Borderline*, the French film by René Clair, Cavalcanti, Dryer, etc., the German film by G. W. Pabst (*Dreigroschen Oper*, *Kamaradschaft*) Ruttman and one or two more, there were stills from American pictures by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Warner Bros. and a set from the lovely films of the Dutch Joris Ivens.

* Which statement refers to photomontage and rayography in so far as they claim to be considered as mere art, for they are an efficient help to applied photography.

Most of those collected in the exhibition have already been published by *Close Up*, of which magazine, specimen copies were on view.

How landscapes look from the airship and the way from a bird's eye view to the readily designed map, as well as the different apparatus in use, were exhibited in the section for aerial photography, which gave to all, including the layman, an interesting survey of that branch.

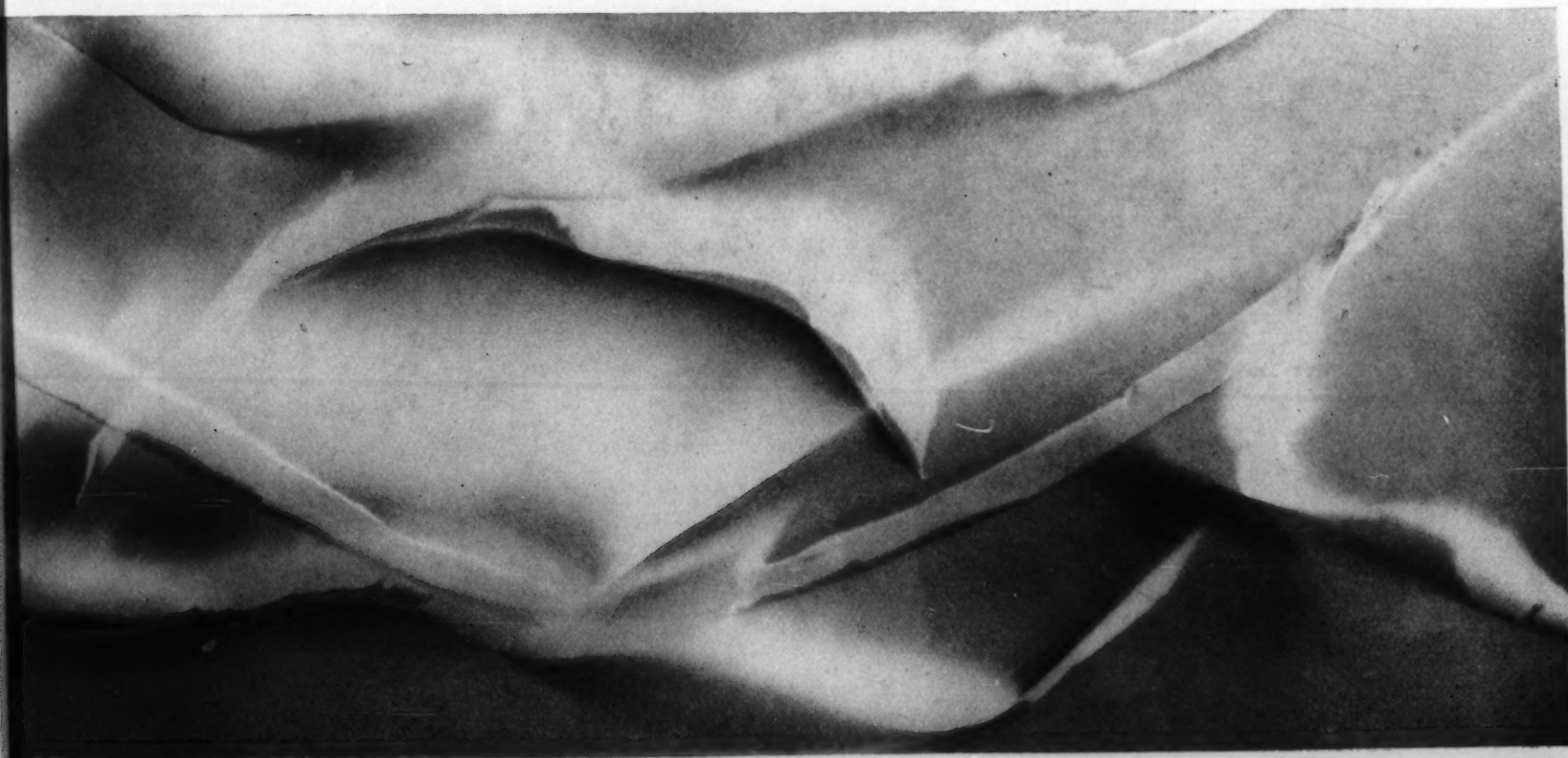
Only the University of Brussels and a physician from the Belgian Congo contributed to the section of scientific photography, and although the work shown was good, the division was far from being comprehensive. There were some excellent microphotographs of medical objects, as well as records of operations on the eye and typical symptoms of sleeping sickness.

There was a complete collection of the books of photographs that are so popular nowadays and enlargements also from some of these volumes.*

To conclude, we may say that the Brussels exhibition is one of the richest and greatest seen during the last years.

TRUDE WEISS.

* During the time the exhibition was held four special performances were arranged by the *Club de l'Ecran*, Brussels, at which, among others, films by Man Ray and Cavalcanti were shown; the object of one evening was the French film of 1932.



"Flight of Fancy," by Oswell Blakeston.
"Envolée fantaisiste," par Oswell Blakeston.
"Phantasieflucht," von Oswell Blakeston.



"Afterthought," by Oswell Blakeston.
"Arrière-pensée," par Oswell Blakeston.
"Nachgedanken," von Oswell Blakeston.



"Das Licht Requisit," Moholy Nagy.



*Advance stills from "The Blonde Venus."
The new Von Sternberg Paramount Film.
Marlene Dietrich.*







NOTES ON SOME FILMS

Berlin, June, 1932.

Berlin is too unsettled, too fearful of the coming winter to care much for cinema. The atmosphere in the streets is only to be compared with that of any large city in 1914-1918. After two or three days, the visitor wonders why revolution does not happen, not that there is any specific thing to provoke it apparent to the eyes, but outbreak against this odd insecure heaviness is to be preferred than waiting for a storm that has sometime got to burst. There is trouble as well in the studios. Everyone is going or has left. Even Pabst has gone, he was born in Austria. Only the hundred per cent German will be allowed to work in German films in future. With this about, and election talk, and groups of Nazis on foot or on motor cycles, patrolling the streets in full uniform, is it to be wondered at that for the first time in many visits, the cinema lists are left unopened.

After a few days there is some (not much) re-adjustment, business is remembered. The film that interests Berlin most at this moment is *Kühle Wampe*.

Wherever there is a space of waste land near Berlin there is often a settlement of tents or makeshift huts put up by the unemployed unable to pay rent. *Kühle Wampe* is simply the name of one of these settlements, and the study of a family hit by unemployment.

There is the father, the average German workman, the mother busy with her kitchen and few pieces of furniture, the son and the daughter. Of them all only the daughter has retained her job. The film opens with a crowd of unemployed men, many on bicycles, waiting for the paper to come out, giving most addresses of possible employment. The son in company with hundreds of others dashes off, only to find a sign up, no more workers needed. He returns to a home tense with the irritation and uncertainty caused by lack of work. There is one of those meaningless quarrels that happen only in times of thunder, nerves, crisis. The boy takes off his watch, scrambles on to a ledge, there are people below pointing to the window, an ambulance and one less in Berlin to seek work.

There is no money to pay the rent. The girl goes from office to state office in search of help. *Im Namen des Volkes*, in the name of the people, the eviction notices are read out. (In the uncensored version this is read slowly the first time, then as more and more papers are picked up, it is repeated more and more quickly, until it rattles on the ears like a despairing and approaching doom. Owing to the political conditions in Germany it was allowed to be read once only in the version for public exhibition.) Chairs are piled in the courtyard in front of the tenement.

The girl's fiancé suggests they join him at *Kühle Wampe*. As in the picture (see page 163) they scramble down the rough path to a settlement of tents and huts made of odd planks. The mother has kept her texts, her heavy unsuitable furniture. The old people are not happy out of their environment. The girl loses her job.

She wanders through the woods to the tram with her lover. She is going to have a child and there is no money.

Her family insist upon marriage and in spite of their lack of work, give a betrothal feast.

Outside the fiancé collects crates of beer and passes them into the tent. He is desperate and angry. Inside, the people without interest or hope, turn the occasion into an orgy of drunkenness and despair. It is the feast in *Greed* carried to a more realistic, inevitable conclusion. The girl goes outside. She realises that her lover will marry her only on account of parental pressure. While the bottles are being knocked over and emptied, she packs some clothes and leaves them all, lover, family and the settlement, and goes to a girl she knows.

The months pass. She gets work once more, joins an association of workers and unemployed. One day there is a big *sportfest* organised. There is swimming, racing, and by accident the lover, also an onlooker, meets the girl again. They crowd back at night to Berlin as they can, in trains and on cycles.

Someone says "coffee." The word at once evokes different associations. It is being burnt in Brazil to keep up prices, it must be heated so many times, an old lady declares, it costs just so much in this shop, all points of view are argued. You cannot change the world, the old say, shaking their heads and the young answer, "We can if you couldn't." The film ends with the workers tramping through the underground tunnel towards the street.

Kühle Wampe is of importance above all for its tendencies. As a film it lacks unity, for it falls into three divisions. First there is the excellent but grim story of Berlin unemployed, told with no object other than the statement of the story. This ends where the girl, rather than be forced into a marriage that will only duplicate her mother's life, marches off without a job into the darkness of the woods around the settlement. It is perhaps the first time that a picture of present conditions that yet ends constructively, has been put on the screen.

The *sportfest* follows. This would be of great interest to an English audience for it was actually taken in one of the outdoor camps for the unemployed and the unemployed were largely used as actors in it. It has also psychological interest for the girl is not shown either hating her former lover or immediately becoming friends again (as in Hollywood), but the event is allowed to happen, they may continue together or they may separate once more.

Then there is the third and final section in the train, where the casual repetition of the word "coffee" is allowed to evoke different backgrounds of different types shown, many of them, in close ups. It is one of the best examples of the experimental use of sound that has been seen. And this division, with its changing heads and shouts, and the authentic atmosphere of a crowded train after a holiday, is full of the belief that if the education and viewpoint of the masses could be changed, there would be a different world.

The whole film would be extremely interesting to an English observer, for it is so true to the outer aspects, at any rate, of Berlin life to-day. The weakness of the picture is perhaps its lack of unity, and its bare statement (it would have needed six more reels to work it out in detail) that once the girl joined the political division of the extreme left, all went well. It is quite possible that joining such a group would have helped her in the way described. But we needed to be shown how this happened, instead of being given the formula in a couple of brief shots. No doubt

in view of present political conditions in Germany it was impossible to present this point of view in detail.

Kühle Wampe was made by a group of young film workers. The scenario was by Brecht (who will be remembered in connection with his work in *Dreigroschen* and the opera, *Mahagonny*), the music was by Eisner and it was directed by Dudov. It was made under conditions of great difficulty. About half way through the film the company whose sound installation was being used objected on political grounds. They could not begin the picture over again from the beginning and therefore much of the money that should have gone into the photography went instead into lawsuits. During the struggle it was stated by some of the chief film producers in Germany that it was not in their interest that films of a higher artistic level should be made. Probably this point of view accounts for the falling off (sometimes estimated at 65%) of the cinema audiences of the world.

The film was rejected by the censor and was only released after many cuts had been made. Brecht and Dudov organised a series of lectures after the showing of the film, in which they endeavoured to collect the opinions of the workers about it. When *Kühle Wampe* was finally released however, it was shown in numbers of cinemas in all parts of Berlin and was certainly the most discussed film of the season.

Lotte Reiniger's *Harlekin* has been described elsewhere in this issue of *Close Up*. I will mention only that it is by far the most successful film that she has ever made, and that the addition of sound has transformed the silhouette film so entirely, that many who thought the silent ones delightful toys only, now recognise that she has made a real contribution to cinematographic art. It is a film that should appeal to all audiences and it is to be hoped that it will soon be shown in England.

The most lovely perhaps of the films I saw was *Nippon*. Japan produces many historical reconstructions of its early and mediaeval history, but these are seldom suitable for showing to western audiences, on account of their length and repetitions of scenes and gestures. Dr. Koch took two of these films and turned each into an episode in which, while none of the beauty of the original was lost, the re-iteration of motives was omitted. It would be a dangerous experiment except in the hands of one who knew not only the possibilities of cinema, but also a great deal of Japanese culture. It has been, however, completely successful in the first two parts of *Nippon*. The Japanese insisted upon an example of their modern films being shown, which was much weaker and it would seem better if in future, the impressiveness of the first two parts were not blurred by the rather ordinary scenes of a film centred about a Japanese railway station. Sound is used throughout the film most skilfully, with a little Japanese dialogue (spoken by Japanese students in Berlin) that added to the interest.

I had always thought of the Japanese landscape as static, or rather formal. But in *Nippon* there is more feeling for wind and motion than in any films I have seen, except perhaps some of Pudovkin's pictures. Two Japanese meet on a hill and it is the way the grasses bend as they walk that is important, and not the figures. A boy rides down a slope, but it is the wind that one sees and not the horse. The shadows of deer in a park become those of mediaeval beasts. There is a magnificent scene of fighting in a courtyard in which all the thought behind movement of

Japanese judo appears, about which so much is to be read but which is so seldom to be seen. There is the same impact of the faces that was part of the first effect of early Russian films. I myself wanted to see *Nippon* again a dozen times. It is not to be compared with the rather dull films of modern Japanese life that have occasionally been seen in London.

The French version of *L'Atlantide* was shown privately during my visit. As it is certain to be shown in London during the autumn, I prefer to notice it only briefly here. Technically it is as great as anything Mr. Pabst has done, particularly the use of Arab sounds is excellent, and no one, anywhere, has so captured visually the spirit of the desert. There are single shots of camels and wild hills that are as authentic and lovely as any page of *Arabia Deserta*. But I myself feel very strongly that a director of Mr. Pabst's genius, should not have to waste his time upon that type of story. It involves perhaps a greater moral issue than would be apparent at first glance. Thousands of people will no doubt lose themselves in an escape of dream, in this really Saharan world of sand, white pillars, camels, and dark cliffs. It is just as right that they should have this escape at the present time as that I should rebel against it. It is never done in a Hollywood manner, and the atmosphere of the desert is absolutely authentic. But I could not read a Victorian novel at this time of crisis and so I do not feel able to write dispassionately about a film whose only failure is in its scenario, with the record of Mr. Pabst's work in *Jeanne Ney*, *Westfront* and *Kameradschaft* fresh in my mind. On the other hand, I am equally certain that many people will regard *L'Atlantide* as probably his finest work to date.

Readers of *Close Up* should do all in their power to see these four pictures, *Kühle Wampe*, *Harlekin*, *Nippon* and *L'Atlantide*, for they will certainly rank among the great films of 1932.

BRYHER.



KITSCH

Against the attempts of psycho-analysis to solve aesthetic problems the objection is urged with a persistence bordering on monotony that it is all very interesting, stimulating and even fruitful, but really quite hopeless, for aesthetics fixes values, whereas psycho-analysis, being a pure natural science, must, as a matter of course, desist from any attempt at valuation. This assertion is true, but the objection deduced from it is false. Rather, from the successful achievements of psycho-analysis—for instance, from Freud's "Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious"—one ought to draw the conclusion that aesthetics too comprises a domain in which, though it does not fix values, it tries to investigate the laws controlling the genesis and decline of the psychical reactions subject to aesthetic valuations. Also, with all due deference to aesthetics as a fixer of values, one ought not to forget how sadly its judgments have proved wanting up to now. The wisest systems are reduced to helpless silence so soon as an unaccustomed

phenomenon confronts them—an original work, a new line or even a new species of art, such as the film. We have not yet progressed very far beyond the Nestrovan : “ Yes, if this is beautiful, it is of course beautiful.”

So long as there were closed cultural circles and so far as such still exist, it was or is quite idle to deduce valuations from a theory. Every one knew what was beautiful : namely, what gave pleasure to himself and his compatriots or compeers ; the unfamiliar was rejected without much effort of thought. With the Renaissance began the process of linking up the various nations ; owing to the new means of production the closed cultural circles were more or less thoroughly broken up, deprived of their insular character and dissolved into a general human mass. And here begins the necessity and at the same time the problem of aesthetic valuations. (This is, of course, only a fraction of the total development, which operated similarly in the domains of religion, ethics and social questions). The capacity for aesthetic experience is incomparably wider in the modern man than at any earlier epoch. He is sensible of the beauty of the sea and of wild, lofty mountains, which was imperceptible to the ancients ; he feels the charm of the machine with its power and purposefulness, which was denied by the romantics ; he is able to appreciate deeply and sympathetically both Greek statues and negro masks, both the Gothic and the East Asiatic. This abundance necessarily produces some confusion, and the multitudinous diversity engenders a superficiality which prevents anything from penetrating very deeply ; thence a lack of judgment and, as a protection against the perpetual readiness to succumb to an impression, a craving for a fixed theoretical criterion of value. As, at the same time, artistic, like every other, output has, as a result of the new technical resources, assumed a hitherto undreamed of scope and character, our age is confronted with a new problem, which had scarcely any importance for the men of the closed cultural circles—with the question : “ Do I really like what I like ? Or is my dislike the proof of a new and stronger quality which I am not yet able to appreciate ? Is it really the herald of a more profound liking ? ” In other words : “ What is Kitsch ? ”

Having forced our way to our subject through the crowded and terrible straits of argumentation, we may now repeat the question as to the sphere of validity of psycho-analysis. Kitsch is not one of the eternal problems ; it is sprung mainly from the peculiarity or, if you like, the lack of peculiarity of the aesthetic culture of our age. The determination what is Kitsch and what is not cannot, therefore, be deduced from the fundamental laws of psychic processes which psycho-analysis is investigating. From one point of view, however, psycho-analysis can contribute something towards the solution. Associated with Kitsch is a quite special form of mass reaction, and what psycho-analysis teaches about these things and about the emotional basis of mass formation is the more applicable since a number of connections with the problem of art have already been established here.

We shall have to disregard the need for a definition of what constitutes “ Kitsch.” Its main characteristics are usually thought to be sugary sentimentality and omission of the painful and disgusting sides of reality, but this does not by any means exhaust the whole conception, for in addition to rose-coloured Kitsch, there is a savage, brutal as well as an “ originality Kitsch ” and also a “ refined Kitsch,” which seems to satisfy all the higher claims. Nor is it helpful to refer

to lack of true originality as the distinctive feature, for that is only substituting one ignorance for another. Judged by present-day notions of intellectual property Shakespeare would rank as the most shameless plagiarist.

Moreover analysis of the contents which lie at the base of a work—daydreams or unconscious fantasies—cannot offer the slightest clue; they are far too typical in character to afford any criterion. The talentless product of a puberty conflict is just as much built up on the Oedipus complex as is *Hamlet*, and the story of the foundling who is ultimately restored to his parents has given rise to just as many magnificent myths as it has to Kitsch films. The difference lies not in the subject but in the manner in which it is treated: the work of art creates new, hitherto unknown possibilities of inner experience, new approaches to the unconscious base; Kitsch relies on safe and long familiar effects: A tree in blossom under a spring sky is beautiful, the death of a child is touching—that we have long known and no new feature is added to this knowledge. But perhaps a little bit of known fact may be inserted here. The artist, so much we believe ourselves to know, is impelled to creative activity by the sense of guilt attached to his daydreams. Any one who produces Kitsch obviously has no such sense of guilt to contend with, he is freer in relation to the fantasy contents of his production: that is to say, he is bound to it by far less inward sympathy. One might—with some exaggeration but with essential justice—hazard the formula: Kitsch is the exploitation of daydreams by those who never had any.

Consequently, a work which in itself can only be accounted Kitsch may produce on one person or another a very deep impression such as is generally only produced by a genuine work of art—if, that is to say, the daydreams and with them the “complexes” of the person receiving the impression are so disposed that they happen to coincide exactly with what is offered by the work in question. I once observed an effect of this nature during an analysis where I was quite able to understand it. The person I was analysing had been deeply and lastingly stirred by the film, *The Fiddler of Florence*, which, despite the acting and some interesting details, must certainly be ranked as Kitsch. The film described, in fact, almost the whole evolution of her suppressed childhood; it dealt with and solved her unconscious conflicts: the craving for sole possession of the widowed father, the fear of losing him by his second marriage, the attempted flight into masculinity in order to escape disappointment, and the final reunion with a new, rejuvenated father and discarding of the masculine disguise.

The remoteness of Kitsch from the unconscious and the daydreams of its author may therefore be non-existent for the person succumbing to its influence; such a case is, however, an exception, and the question is: what is the rule? Can we make any pronouncement as to the way in which Kitsch produces an impression on the average public, the “many-headed multitude?”

Instead of stopping short at the platitude that Kitsch and multitude belong together, we will proceed from a little peculiarity which to an attentive observer must seem rather remarkable. Among the German films of last year, for example, were those military farces which for a considerable time enjoyed such boundless popularity with the public that it was by no means easy for the film-lover to avoid them. These films, like the army itself, comprise two different worlds: officers

and men. In the officers' world there would be a surly-tempered colonel and, above all, an intolerably smart lieutenant—anything from a count upwards—who loves a girl belonging to the world of the privates and is loved by her in return, until they give each other up and the lieutenant marries his exquisitely lovely and virtuous bride—anything from a princess downwards. In the world of the private soldiers there is less that is noble and enviable; here too, there is indeed a sergeant-major with a rough exterior, but above all there is an orderly who is lazy, awkward, greedy or vicious, and who gets well paid-out for it. Apparently, it is easier to ridicule these stock figures than to replace them by new ones, for, with slight modifications, they have touched and amused the public again and again. But what is this public which identifies itself so promptly and readily with the protagonists in a world of officers and princesses and is so delighted by ridicule of the common man? One might imagine it to consist only of men of the "upper circles," men who might have been lieutenants and girls who might at least have carried the bridal train of the princess. As we know, however, this is by no means the case; the success of these films with the big public is sufficient proof that the overwhelming majority of their admirers are men who might have become orderlies and girls who might at best have been deserted by a lieutenant, and these are the people who take an enthusiastic interest in this sort of thing. It might be suggested that the explanation is to be sought in the political temper, which is responsible for these and many other aberrations. But we find the same thing elsewhere, though not with equal crassness. Let us take a typical example of American Kitsch—*Shanghai Express*. Does the female portion of the American film public (incidentally this film has also had a great success in Germany) consist to a noteworthy extent of girls who may hope to be one day transformed into courtesans of stainless virtue, who are at first loaded with presents and elegant toilettes and are finally led to the altar by some heroic soul?

To such questions we may find a reply first of all from the sociological point of view, namely, that the lower, suppressed classes, in so far as they are not educated to independent class-consciousness, accept and firmly adhere to the ideals of the higher class which governs them. This sociological fact has a very obvious psychological background which appertains to our theme. Undoubtedly, where alien ideals are borrowed and imitated the possibility of Kitsch is particularly imminent. It would be interesting, however, to find out something more about the mechanisms by which, whatever the situation—and it is certainly not exclusively a matter of the borrowed class idea—the fantasy emotional response or, in other words, the satisfaction of aesthetic needs is, as a mass phenomenon, most readily accomplished by way of Kitsch.

If a man wants to fall in love or become a hero or be otherwise impressive and interesting in accordance with the ideals of a way of life that is alien to him, he will undoubtedly find this more difficult than if he were moving in his own familiar, everyday sphere. A crowd composed of such individuals needs, therefore, a larger measure of help, and will be grateful if the course of its emotional response is plainly indicated. The tendency to win this special kind of gratitude from the public is the infallible road to Kitsch, although, of course, it may be realized by very various means—more subtle or more gross as the case may be. It is always a

matter of introducing unmistakably clear indications, plainly legible signposts, as it were, which are scattered through the whole work from beginning to end and steer the possibilities of emotional response along definite channels. For instance, the public can only successfully identify itself with definite figures and from a definite point of view—but with these it can identify with the greatest ease. Who or what is good and beautiful or ugly and reprehensible, who is suffering in an enviable and who in only a comical way must be made so emphatically obvious as to be comprehensible to the dumbest intelligence. Obviously well-tried methods and familiar standards lend themselves best to this purpose. For the ends of Kitsch, therefore, anything new or bound up with the spiritual experience of the author is not only superfluous, as has already been shown, but absolutely prejudicial; he must not merely be content not to seek it, but must take pains to avoid it at any cost. There must be no hint of the diverse possibilities of psychic decisions, through which in a work of art first the creator and then—in a less degree—the person responding to the work must force his way; there must be no mention of doubt or of the awful question: "Soul, whither hast thou led me—what has become of me?" Or, should it, none the less, be voiced, the reassuring answer must follow promptly and plainly: "Among good people."

For all this, we must not over-estimate the importance of obvious "signpost" technique as an objective aid towards classification as Kitsch. The boundaries separating the artistic urge towards clarity and form from the signpost methods proper to Kitsch are very often debatable in the individual case. Perhaps it may help us to arrive at the determining characteristics if we consider the effect produced in one or another case on an eagerly receptive crowd.

From the point of view of the public, Kitsch has the advantage that it renders their enjoyment as effortless as possible and guards them against uncertainty and allusions to unpleasant recollections. It is no wonder if most prefer it unreservedly—yet certain limitations and weaknesses are inseparably bound up with this advantage.

Owing to the skill with which the distribution of emotions is anticipated, the public are indeed saved a good deal of worry, including that of choice, but at the same time the free development of their emotions is restricted; the possibility of lifting them by degrees out of the unconscious and letting them have free play is done away with. The process must involve the minimum of psychic activity and must never be arrested. Hence it is that Kitsch, which mainly relies on the old and well-tried, cannot dispense with the attraction of the new or ultra-new: one popular song succeeds another, each season brings its operettas and revues; in one's recollection they all seem indistinguishably alike. But the film-producers, if they are ambitious, search for an "original milieu."

The action of Kitsch on an eagerly receptive public is, therefore, easily characterized: it begins promptly and it is soon over. The emotions released are so universal and superficial as to be independent of the individual work. It is applauded and forgotten, like its predecessors, and its successor has a like fate: indeed all of them taken together have only the emotional value of a single work. The influence of a work of art need not necessarily operate slowly, but it may do so, and where it has once been achieved it is indestructible. Nothing less than a total

transformation of the personality—apart from variations of intensity—is required in order to extinguish the impression left by a work of art ; the changes it has wrought are too considerable for it ever again to become a matter of indifference. That it may even be added that this fact, as is common knowledge, is reflected in the larger dimensions of historical happenings. The appreciation accorded to a work of art and the capacity to respond to it emotionally are not diminished by the passing of the centuries. Kitsch no more finds a permanent resting-place in its age than it does in the soul of the individual.

HANNS SACHS.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

NOTICE TO FILM SOCIETIES

Several film societies have written recently to ask why we do not devote more space to a chronicle of their work. We should be glad to include notes from them in *Close Up*, if they will send reports in to our office.

We are sure that the societies will understand that it is not possible for us to write to them all each quarter, to remind them to send in their articles.

Reports should not exceed five hundred words in length and it must be understood that the persons sending them to us, are responsible for whatever statement they contain. The papers must reach us six weeks before our publication date, on January, April, July and October 15th. As our space is limited preference will be given to reports dealing with films of standard size, and should too many reach us for inclusion in any one issue, those societies omitted will be selected first for the subsequent number of the magazine.

We hope therefore to include reports of the activities of Provincial Film Societies and the Amateur Film Movement in England in the December issue.

THE SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY.

During its first season the Southampton Film Society obtained a membership of some 350 : of these 205 were Full Members, and 110 were Associate Members (Students under 21).

In the course of six performances twenty-four films were shown. These included : *Berlin, Earth, Drifters, The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari, The Town of To-Morrow, The Battle of the Plants, Cinderella, Bluebottles.*

The General Line was not included in the voting list.

As a result of further voting it was shown that about 65% of members definitely preferred silent to sound films.

The Society has now acquired facilities for the exhibition of sound films at a local cinema, and it is intended to give three performances of sound and three of silent films during the coming season.

It is also intended to hold an international exhibition of film stills and literature at the beginning of October, and it is hoped that this will result in making the society more widely known to the general public.

THE MANCHESTER FILM SOCIETY

The Manchester Film Society report that they are now concentrating upon 16 m.m. stock. They have just finished a 200 ft. picture, *Heat Wave*, directed by A. L. Roussin, photographed by Ruth le Neve Foster, and acted by Lilian Goodfellow and P. A. le Neve Foster.

They have made also a little burlesque on American gangster films called *Strangeways Mary—the girl who had just come out*. (Strangeways Prison is the name of Manchester's jail.) The film was made in two days, complete with deep dyed villain, the repentant crook, simpering heroine and a happy ending on a farm with a flock of hens in the background!!

At the moment Mr. P. A. le Neve Foster reports, they are engaged in taking a little picture of a garage mechanic who, after a great pawning of the family possessions etc., manages to acquire a second hand racing car to enter for the Southport motor race, "which he does not win, nor does he marry the girl from the garage. The film is a little study of the ordinary small town garage. There is the girl book keeper, the general odd job man who washes cars and works the petrol pump, and the one or two bright young motor mechanics who spend their off moments reading the racing news in the motoring papers and whose one ambition in life is to drive a car in some sort of a motor race. They are typical of thousands of young men, especially young men in the motor trade in any north country industrial town." Mr. Roussin is directing the film, and Mrs. R. Le Neve Foster is at the camera. "The garage scenes are being made at a real garage, the managing director of which is one of the members of the Manchester Film Society. The motor racing stuff will be made at the Southport races with co-operation from the authorities. The lighting system consists of ordinary half watt lamps running at 90° overload which multiplies their photographic efficiency seven and a half times. This enables us to use them anywhere with ordinary domestic wiring."

Mr. P. A. le Neve Foster has also made a short industrial film dealing with the manufacture of soap.

"LANDS, FILMS & CRITICS."

Harry Alan Potamkin, New York correspondent of *Close Up*, member of the Exceptional Photoplays Committee of the National Board of Review, contributor

on the film to journals here and abroad, will conduct what is probably the first course of its kind in America, a series of 12 lectures, accompanied by film excerpts and accessories, as well as invited guest-speakers. The series will begin with a consideration of the aspirations among men and the earlier arts which ultimately led to the cinema; the movie's pre-natal days; its early history; the concentration of control in finance capital, Hollywood, Hays; the international arena; the film as merchandise, seller of other merchandise, vendor of the national idea, instrument of colonial control. The lectures will compare first statements with first principles; the evolution of the film as an art will be followed; the social energies as they effect the film in each nation will be scrutinized; the pivotal films will be studied; the character and progress of the compound cinema (sound-sight, verbal, future forms) will be presented. Special lectures will be devoted to the animated film (not the cartoon alone), its derivations, its national uses, its possibilities. The relation, historical and aesthetic, of music and film will be treated. Comedy will come under the head of a special lecture on film humor. In every instance it will be the intention to extract the irreducible principle that will serve to clarify the true critical foundations of the cinema. The various fallacies and inflations of first statements into principles will be analyzed. An effort will be made to define the terminology of motion picture literature. Certain particular relations will be advanced: Kreuger and cinema, the Italian film and "the march on Rome," labor and cinema, the Russian film—czarist, Soviet, emigré. Much data will be entirely of original research, and certainly the complete inter-relationship will be for the first time offered to a serious student-body. The course begins in October and is on the roster of the New School for Social Research, New York.

FILM REVIEW

Das keimende Leben, (Ewald Film, Berlin). A documentary film on the pre-natal development of man.

Special problems from the early development of man and childbirth have been the object of a good many of popular as well as scientific films, but the German silent film "*Das keimende Leben*" (Germinating Life) represents the first German attempt to produce a film which gives a complete survey on development from the very growth of the seed—and egg-cells up to child-birth. The film though being popular and made for the purpose of teaching the masses, is absolutely true and correct from the standpoint of theoretical biology as well as of practised medicine.

It starts—as has been stated before—from the development of the generative cells, showing alternately microphotographs, microfilm and trick designs. The division of the cells and of the fertilised egg is beautifully explained, as well as the growth of the multiplying cells. This part dealing with the very early stages of development is exclusively done by trick-designs due to the fact that one has not yet been able to watch these stages in the course of human development. Here again there was an occasion to be convinced of the highly instructive value of well done trick designs, and I can tell from my own experience that what a

medical student does not understand from hours of book-reading, he grasps within five minutes, seeing the film.

This is not the place to go into the details of the film but I should like to mention the very fine shots on blood-circulation, the explanation of the growth of the skeleton (skeletons of embryos of different ages standing side by side on a plain level, so that their heads form the growth-curve, a rare and interesting operation) and the shots on child-birth, first theoretically explained by trick-designs, then fading into the record taken in a hospital.

There is furthermore the report of a doctor's consultation hour, revealing the necessity of medical observation during the gravidity to young mothers.

And towards the end there are those lovely shots of about fifty young babies lying in their baskets in a clinic in Berlin, the camera wandering from one basket to the other taking close ups of the little beings who seem to look all alike—and yet so different.

The film is absolutely serious and, unlike so many popular scientific films, free from romance and mysticism. The photography is exceedingly good and clear.

T. WEISS.

BOOK REVIEWS—NEW BOOKS

It's no use trying to cut off the arms of an octopus, you must put the knife in its mouth !

Here, knife !

The Observer runs a column with the heading, *Sayings of the Week*. One week : "There are always beautiful clouds over Westminster," the Dean of Westminster !

That admirable publication, *Arts et Métiers Graphiques*, have issued a special number, *A Travers les Nuages*. A volume of tinted pages of clouds, of great skies with fleets of airplanes looking like cosmic scaffolding, of air-photos of sea looking like immense bubbles of activity, of parachutes, skyscrapers and so on, A.S.O. (It's not a bad plan to write clichés in initials, it gives them some kind of freshness).

Second Series of Art Forms in Nature (A. Zwemmer, Charing Cross Road, £2. 2s. od.) is a superb affair. Better than the first, for the photos are more spread in their jewelry, A.S.O.

From these two banging down to British films.

Well, we knew a lady who declared that it was the tragedy of her life to have missed seeing the Prince of Wales in butter at Wembley ! In other words, there's no accounting for tastes ; or should that be T.'s N.A.F.T. ?

The Financial News for the issue of June 30th, 1932, brought out a number dedicated to the British Cinema Industry. It's one thing to consider the wishes of the advertisement manager and quite another to put patriotism before the readers : we mean that we consider the issue has been confused. Just as the issue of marriage would become so much clearer in the mind of the modern miss if

she were married in a bank instead of a church or registry office, so would the business of special numbers of periodicals be given the right importance in the mind of the reader were the special advertising receipts printed on the first page.

It's no use for Connie to speak of British talent, or for Alfred Hitchcock to say that we don't need stars: we always have the inner insecurity of knowing that articles have to be shaped and selected so as not to offend the advertisers.

British films? . . . We remember what a "char." once told us; "The doctor said to my husband, 'Now you mustn't take any thing stimulating like bread or potatoes!'"

A man, in *I Lost my Memory* (Faber and Faber, 7s. 6d.), slipped from his house and lost in a flash twenty or thirty years of his life. He relates how he went to a cinema expecting to see the early flicker gems. Instead, he saw a British film—but he liked it! . . . One gets tired of all the Spanish which is spoken in Spain!

British Ballet, now, can begin to hold its own. William Chappell is a good dancer and brilliant designer of décor; Frederick Ashton is a most promising choreographer; and there are Walter Gore, Stanley Judson, A.S.O. *Our Dancers*, edited by Arnold L. Haskell (British Continental Press, Ltd., 5s.), can only be regarded as a book for those who immoderately love the back altar-chat of ballet. Some of the photos come from a film specially taken by Walter Duff; they are even less impressive than the posed stills.

When the editor of a certain socialist periodical goes on a railway journey, he tells us that he takes with him "little things to read, little things to eat and little things to play with!"

The Amateur Ciné Movement, by Marjorie A. Lovell Burgess. (Sampson Low. 5s.)

G. A. Atkinson writes a preface to this volume in which he states that he believes Miss Burgess to be writing better literature than anyone else under his notice in current journalism.

Alack! we can only judge what we can see, we cannot judge this book by articles Miss Burgess may write in *The Era*.

If we are shown a picture of three men, it is not fair as a critic (however right as a poet!) to say, "This is such an interesting picture because it shows three men walking in a field while their soup cools!"

As it stands, Miss Burgess' book is dull on the whole with useful information reserved for two or three of the twenty four chapters.

The book is enlivened by the illustration over the caption, "The colourful romantic East!"

With regard to the amateur film movement, Miss Burgess finds in it an echo of the mediaeval guild days.

"Ah!" says the critic, his voice playing over all the scales.

O.B.

Phantom Fame. By Harry Reichenbach. (Noel Douglas. 7/6).

A female novelist of our acquaintance once made a list of literature to be taken on a holiday. On a little bit of grimy paper she wrote: some Kipling and (what looked like) *Bothering Heights!*

For our part our holiday list would be certain to include Reichenbach's anatomy of ballyhoo. We like this book: we like it very much. We are almost as pleased as if someone had drawn a map with a scale of a mile to a mile—one of our lifelong dreams.

Harry received early in life excellent advice from a travelling carnival man. "Never give a sucker an even break. It's dog eat dog all along the line. For every kid born with fifty dollars there's twins born on the other side of the street scheming to take the fifty from him." Reichenbach was the toast under the marrow. He lived to: make famous a hand-cuff king who couldn't get out of his own shirt, change the government of Uruguay in two weeks with a newspaper coupon, have a lion stop at a first-class hotel to advertise a movie, and even get Rudolph Valentino's beard to lie in state in a California museum!

Clara Kimball Young, Charles Ray, Gloria Swanson, Rudolph Valentino, Wallace Reid, Barbara La Marr and Francis X. Bushman—these are some of the stars for whom Reichenbach did super publicity. He has stories about them all. How he got a crowd to follow Francis Bushman to Metro's office by dropping pennies along the street: and how the Metro staff were so impressed at the popularity of Mr. Bushman (or, rather, Mr. Reichenbach's pennies) that they *made* him sign a fat contract for triple his usual salary. How Barbara La Marr drank herself out of pictures and had to be held staggering in front of the camera for her last feature. How Stroheim said to Harry, "Now listen to me, if you do one thing in your publicity that I don't like I shall come to your office and bite your throat open!" . . . Are you alright, Film Fan, are you keeping your nerve?

It's a grand volume! We are prepared to fiddle with our Reichenbach while the book shop burns! O.B.

My Hollywood Diary. By Edgar Wallace (Hutchinson. 7/6).

The private diary, written by Edgar for his wife, which is thrilling because it shows exactly how quickly Mr. Wallace could write a sound mystery movie.

It is also, on account of the later tragedy, a sad and simple document. There are even pictures of Greta Garbo because Mr. Wallace spoke to someone about Garbo.

A dignified memory if not a very informing book. O.B.

Bombay Riots. By C. Dennis Pegge. (Scholartis Press. 10/6).

Every cinéphile, who grows a library of film books, will want to add this beautifully produced volume to his collection.

Like all Scholartis books, it is a joy to see and hold. But apart from, although never neglecting, the value of fine printing, this book is noteworthy on account of the exciting material it contains. The moving situation, of a violent riot of Gandi-ites, is offered as a written scenario: the author describes it as a "film poem."

It is our opinion that the author would have been better advised to use the form of a poem, employing the inferential technique of Chinese verse. Then we

might not have found the introductory scenes so far from the unit scheme or the closing scenes so steady.

However, as Mr. Pegge has presented his matter as a talkie, it is for us to criticise it as a talkie. And there are one or two small, but essentially fundamental, faults we have to find. Mr. Pegge uses sound to fill out or supplement action: he never touches the possibilities of sound for making the short narrative-way round. Mr. Pegge is too fond of visual symbolism that is too stereotyped to be effective—as the superimposition of the child's hands turning the wire puzzle. Mr. Pegge is much too content with what the Russians did.

Yet the sheer novelty and courage of the format will induce serious students of cinema to support Mr. Pegge. In his introduction, Anthony Asquith says, "No novel could have presented this material with the same swift directness . . ." Well, we take this as evidence that Mr. Asquith has economised on his library subscription rather than as a complete justification of Mr. Pegge!

O.B.

Desire—Spanish Version, by Evelyn Eaton. Chapman and Hall. 7/6.

A novel of film life; not film stars but studio staff. The publishers stress the accuracy of the details. . . . Perhaps, one day, a painter will give an exhibition of still life studies with real vitamins mixed into the paint! That ought to get him some publicity!

But Mr. Eaton's book has more: good human qualities and a satiric ending nicely exhibited.

O.B.

THE FILM IN NATIONAL LIFE

(George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1/-.)

People have formed the habit of thinking that official reports are dull. Actually they are often more exciting than most books, and this report, besides its interest, contains summaries of most of the questions likely to present themselves to the student, secretary of a film society, worker in the cinema, or the school teacher. There is a list of projectors examined by the committee together with prices, the voltage required etc., an account of how much use is made in different countries of the educational film, lists of books, of addresses where school films may be obtained, a description of how a film is made and commercially distributed, and a record of the use of the cinema in education and science.

We hope that schools and parents will study particularly Chapter V. "Cinematography in Great Britain has endured the neglect and scorn of those who control the education of the young. For many years most teachers and administrators ignored films. Those who thought about them (with a few notable exceptions) were concerned almost exclusively with attempts to restrict the attendance of children at public cinemas. Educational associations passed (and indeed continue to pass) resolutions deploring the influence of the cinema. Some at least of these resolutions seem to us to have been based less on informed criticism than on an instinctive reaction against a force which educators have

recognised as powerful but have assumed to be the offspring of alien powers of darkness." These sentences sum up the main reason for the low standard of many films to-day. The few who saw the possibilities of cinema were hampered in their attempts to produce artistic films, by the inertia or active opposition of those who should have been helping the children under their care to form a future critical and receptive audience.

There is a useful warning on page 37, against too great an insistence on the "U" certificate, and a reminder that many of the best films from all points of view, must be graded as "A". The sentence "A multitude of 'U' films which no censor could reject saturate their audience in a false conception of the standards and values of ordinary life" summarizes the objection of the thinker to the average film, whether Hollywood made or a British copy.

There is the reprint of the statement made by the Home Secretary, Sir Herbert Samuel, in the House of Commons on 15th April, 1932. "My very expert and experienced advisers at the Home Office are of the opinion that on the whole the cinema conduces more to the prevention of crime than to its commission. It keeps the boys out of mischief; it gives them something to think about." This should be sufficient answer to the many who still object to children, usually without playgrounds, spending a few hours watching films.

Some lists of the many good cultural films available abroad might have been added, together with more definite proposals for reduction of duty on foreign films used in schools, until more English material is available. The excellence of many Russian and German pictures is, however, noted.

It is to be hoped that before further attacks are made on the use of the cinema in education, a copy of this report will be added to all school libraries. It is certainly a volume also, that will be needed for constant consultation by the student.

W.B.

Kind und Kegel vor der Kamera (the diary of a film amateur). By Alex Strasser, Wilhelm Knapp, Halle (Saale), paper R.M. 4. 20., bound R.M. 4. 80. (roughly from 5s. 6d. to 6s. 6d.).

This is the second volume of an excellent series entitled film books for all. It describes, in the form of a diary, how a family buy a movie camera and what they photograph. Of course they make mistakes, and these are well illustrated by photographs, diagrams, and simple explanations. There are many illustrations, showing the effect of too much and too little light, and the many problems that trouble the beginner. Usually the technical film book, in the endeavour to explain in detail, is of little value for the amateur who realises as he is about to turn a scene or view, that some problem of lighting or space is before him about which he knows nothing. He cannot sit down then and read a chapter. But in this booklet, an index, diagrams and illustrations will give him a quick answer that will suffice for the immediate moment, and the opportunity therefore of filming the scene before him will not be lost.

There are chapters on cutting film, on trick films and on projection. It is a book that might well be translated into English or added to the library of those

film societies where newly joined members have a knowledge of German. It is not intended however, for those who already possess a technical knowledge of the subject.

Die Neue Stadt (published by Philipp I Fink, Gross Gerau bei Frankfurt A.M., yearly subscription 9.R.M. 60) formerly *Das Neue Frankfurt*, has many interesting photographs with English as well as German captions, dealing with modern architectural development. Number 4 is devoted to views of the new sky line of New York, together with a short account of the present tendencies in skyscraper construction. A list of exhibitions and competitions for modern buildings is included and the review may be recommended to English students. It is difficult to know with the fluctuating exchange what nine marks sixty pfennige are in English money, but at present the rate runs at about fifteen marks to the pound.

Het Veerwerk, a new publication devoted to the amateur film groups of Holland has reached us for review. It is illustrated with photographs, and contains articles dealing with technical aspects of amateur cinematography. It is interesting to note how much interest there is in Holland for the artistic and experimental film, how many cinemas and papers devoted to it they are able to support, and how many of their independent films have passed into the ordinary commercial cinemas. We wish *Het Veerwerk* all success and regret we have not sufficient knowledge of Dutch to give it a more comprehensive review.

The Times Weekly Edition for June 29th, 1932, contained a special section devoted to the progress of the British Film industry and the production of films in England. While many of the articles were admirable, particularly upon the question of an educational cinema, the illustrations as far as type and material were concerned, might have come out of any Hollywood picture. No attention was drawn to the rich material only available in England and to date, hardly used. Perhaps, however, as this section and as the Film in National Life seem to suggest, the future of English cinematography will lie with the scientific, the advertising and the teaching film. Possibly as present box office demands and these require a different angle of approach, directors of them will acquire experience to utilize the essentially English material waiting to be made into films.

The Film Department of the Workers International Relief, with headquarters in New York, write that they have made many workers news reels during the past year and one full length film entitled *Cannons or Tractors* with regular continuity and plot. Without funds being available for high priced publicity the film attracted seven thousand persons on the first day of its showing in New York. Two subsequent showings raised the total to fourteen thousand. They have groups in seven cities and expect to increase their membership and production during the coming year.

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